Prob. NY Times 22 July 1986

Margaret Schlauch, 88; American Expatriate

WARSAW, July 21 (UPI) — Margaret Schlauch, an American scholar who left the United States in 1951 saying she wished to avoid persecution for pro-Communist views, died over the weekend, the Polish press agency said today. She was 88 years old.

A native of Philadelphia, she was graduated from Barnard College in 1918 and received her Ph.D from Columbia University in 1927. A specialist in linguistics, an authority on Viking literature and Anglo-Saxon, Dr. Schlauch was on the faculty of New York University from 1924 to 1950.

Dr. Schlauch often voiced pro-Soviet sympathies in the 1930's and was among New York City public school and college teachers accused of Communist leanings in 1941. At that time she said she had not been a member of the Communist Party.

She was the author of "The Gift of Tongues," a book about the history and science of language, published in 1942.

In 1951, she affirmed her Marxist views and left the United States to settle in Poland, where she became a professor in the English department of Warsaw University. The same year, she joined the Polish Communist Party and took Polish citizenship.

The Polish Government awarded her one of its highest distinctions — the Order of Reborn Poland (Polonia Restituta).

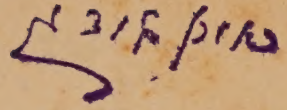
Jerusalem
2 Feb 1999

1st Ed
editors sign

Margaret Schlauch

$150.00

מספרי
ראובן גרדמן דל
בן ר' יעקב
1907 - 1990
איש אוהב ספרי
רודף דעת
וחונן מדעתו לכל
יהי זכרו בריך
ותהי נשמתו צרורה בצרור החיים



THE SAGA OF THE VOLSUNGS

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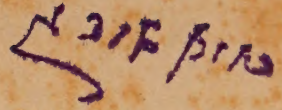

SCANDINAVIAN CLASSICS

VOLUME XXXV

THE SAGA OF THE VOLSUNGS

THE SAGA OF RAGNAR LODBROK

TOGETHER WITH

THE LAY OF KRAKA

Translated from the Old Norse
by
MARGARET SCHLAUCH

NEW YORK
THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION
W · W · NORTON & COMPANY, INC.
Publishers

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First Edition

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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INTRODUCTION

I

THE SAGA OF THE VOLSUNGS

THE story of Sigurd the Dragon-slayer was one of the most celebrated and best loved tales among the Scandinavian peoples during the Middle Ages, and it was current among them in many forms. It was the subject of heroic lay and prose narrative; it was carved on runic stone and church doorway; it was recounted orally for hundreds of years, with many modifications, in Danish and Faroese ballads. There are echoes of it also in the Old English poem *Beowulf,* and it forms the subject of one of the greatest of the Middle High German epics, *The Nibelungenlied.* History, folk-lore, märchen, and survivals of old mythology have gone into the making of it; and since it contains elements of the most intense drama, of lyric emotion and exalted heroism, it is rightly considered one of the most precious legacies of early Germanic literature.

The oldest extant treatment of this story is to be found in *The Poetic Edda,* a collection of lays dealing with gods and heroes of the Scandinavians. Most of these poems were composed during a period from about 900 to 1050. A group of them is devoted to Sigurd and his race; they treat of the most dramatic moments in the lives of the Volsungs (as Sigurd's family is called), when they are rejoicing or suffering most intensely. These narrative lays are unsurpassed of their kind: they are rapid in action, profound in emotion, and vivid in the delineation of character; most important of all, they are colored by a sense of tragedy which arises from a conscious attitude to human life and human suffering on the part of the authors. But unfortunately the narrative contained in this section of the *Edda* is fragmentary, even inconsistent. It gives two conflicting accounts of such an important event as the hero's death; it passes from one crisis to the next with little explanation; it leaves many things to be surmised. In order to supplement it we must turn to the *Volsung Saga,* which was composed by an Icelander in the thirteenth century. As the earliest complete version of the tale which we now possess, it occupies a position of great importance.

The *Volsung Saga* begins with an account of Sigurd's ancestors. King Volsung, the eponymous

hero of the dynasty—though not its founder—is treacherously slain by his own son-in-law, but after years of planning and waiting, this death is avenged by Sigmund and Signy, the King's son and daughter. Sigmund then returns to his father's realm, where he rules until his death in battle. He is the father of three famous heroes: Sinfjotli, Helgi Hunding's Bane, and Sigurd himself. The last son is born posthumously at the court of King Hjalprek, where Sigmund's widow has found refuge. Sigurd grows up there in exile, under the care of a dwarf blacksmith named Regin. When he has attained manhood, he drives out the usurpers from his father's realm, and then undertakes the series of adventures which have made him so celebrated in Germanic literature: the slaying of the dragon Fafnir and of the treacherous dwarf; the winning of the hoard of Nibelung gold, which once had served as a ransom for gods; and the awakening of the warrior maiden Brynhild, who had been put to sleep by Odin on a mountain surrounded by fire. Sigurd does not remain with Brynhild, however; in the search for further adventure he comes to the court of King Gjuki and his sons, where he is made welcome by the Princes Gunnar, Gutthorm, and Hogni, and induced to marry their sister Gudrun. This is made possible by a magic drink which causes him to forget

Brynhild; under its influence he even consents to assume the shape of Gunnar and ride through the magic fire once more to win her for his brother-in-law. After the double marriage has occurred, the two women quarrel, and Brynhild learns from Gudrun's taunts how grievously she has been deceived. She finds no rest until she has induced Gunnar and his brothers to kill Sigurd in revenge, but she takes her own life when this has been accomplished. Gudrun, Sigurd's unhappy widow, is married to Atli, King of the Huns, who covets the gold which her brothers have inherited from Sigurd. In order to obtain it he commits the deadliest of crimes, according to Germanic ideas: he invites his kinsmen by marriage to visit him, and then attacks, captures, and kills them. But Gudrun avenges this death upon him with terrible thoroughness, and then, being a widow once more, she is married a third time and bears three sons. The daughter of Sigurd and Gudrun, Swanhild, is given in marriage to King Jormunrek, who has her trampled to death by horses upon discovering that she has taken his own son as lover. The last deed in the life of Gudrun is the whetting of her sons to avenge the death of their half-sister. When they are slain on this expedition, the race of the Gjukings is at an end.

If we compare this narrative with the one found

in the *Edda,* we see that the author of the *Saga* undoubtedly used the poems as his source. The Sagaman must have had a complete manuscript before him, since he not only gives a coherent account of parts of the story not contained in our extant text of the poems, but he also cites lost lays in illustration. The two strophes quoted on page 126, for instance, which describe how Sigurd rode through the fire to win Brynhild for Gunnar, indicate that there must have been a complete poem on the subject of this second wooing. Besides, the prose text shows traces of alliteration here and there which must be caused by rather faithful adherence to a lost verse source. The *Volsung Saga* serves to fill in a gap in the action from the time of Sigurd's departure from Brynhild to the plot of his brothers-in-law against his life. It also gives a more complete account of Sigmund's career and death than that contained in the *Edda;* and here again the Sagaman apparently used poems now lost to us. There are two lines quoted from one in the *Saga;* but we can only surmise the nature of the lay or lays devoted to Sigurd's father. As for the opening chapters, concerning Sigmund's ancestors, there is nothing to lead us to suppose that they were based on lost poems. Rather they seem to represent what the author could do when he worked independently, with

the purpose of creating a genealogy of the Volsungs reaching back to Odin. The absence of sources seems to have embarrassed him somewhat, for he frequently takes refuge in formulas such as "the tale does not tell" or "some men say" or "to make the story short." This literary timidity does not disappear until he reaches the sections for which he had a known or surmisable source.

It is interesting to compare his treatment with that source in the sections for which the latter has survived. The author tends everywhere to humanize his characters, and to soften whatever was supernatural in their adventures. He provides explanations where the *Edda* leaves us puzzled, and he treats half-mythological beings as men and women. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his treatment of Brynhild, the first love of Sigurd, whom the hero forgets after he has drunk of the magic potion at the court of the Gjukings. It is precisely in the account of Sigurd's relation to her that the *Edda* offered our author the thorniest problem to solve. According to the lays, the maiden whom Sigurd awakened upon the mountain-top was a Valkyrie named Sigrdrifa, and from her he learned much runic wisdom. She had been laid in a magic slumber behind a wall of fire because she had dared to disobey Odin; since a part of

her punishment was to be marriage with an ordinary mortal, we expect quite naturally that that man will be Sigurd himself, but the lay does not definitely tell us that this is so. In later poems we learn of a war-like maiden named Brynhild whom Sigurd wins for his brother-in-law despite his own former oaths to her; and in her monologue after death, the poem called *Brynhild's Hell-Ride,* she describes his first meeting with her in terms which recall the awakening of Sigrdrifa. On the other hand, the *Greater Lay of Sigurd* describes Brynhild as a royal, human maiden, living in a castle and engaged in womanly labors, who is betrothed to Sigurd after he forces his way into her dwelling. As A. Heusler has pointed out, there seems to be a confusion of two motives here, or rather, of two types of heroine: the warrior maiden lying in a magic sleep, and the obstinate princess who must be forcefully wooed. But were these two types originally combined in one person, or did two separate women figure in Sigurd's early exploits? Were Sigrdrifa and Brynhild originally one or two?

In the *Volsung Saga* there is no doubt whatsoever: here the sleeping Valkyrie and the haughty princess are one and the same person, and she is called Brynhild throughout. Yet the most casual reader will notice inconsistencies and difficulties which the author

could not quite smooth out. After Sigurd has awakened Brynhild and left her on her flame-girdled mountain, he evinces but little surprise at finding her suddenly in a tower near his friend's castle, engaged in the very womanly and peaceful occupation of embroidery. He seems indeed to find it necessary to make her acquaintance anew, almost as if they had not met before. The tower in which he visits her is quite an ordinary one; yet later, when he returns to woo her for Gunnar, she is living in a castle surrounded by flames, just as her mountain had been. Twice the author of the Saga permits Brynhild to make a long speech which is supposed to explain her relationship with Sigurd and Gunnar, but neither is consistent with the assumption that she was once Odin's warrior-maid. In Chapter XXIX she says that she was compelled to choose a husband by the will of her father, King Budli, and she determined to have only the hero who could ride through the flames. "I swore an oath *when I was at home with my father* that I would love him alone who was most glorious of all men born, and that is Sigurd," says she. Again in Chapter XXXI she speaks of being wooed "when I was at home with my father," but says nothing about magic sleep or awakening. Despite the identity of name, therefore, there seems to be little in common between this fierce

and vindictive woman, who causes the death of Sigurd and the fall of the Gjukings, and the Valkyrie who once instructed the hero upon her mountain-top.

It is not surprising that scholars have been led to suppose that Sigrdrifa and Brynhild were once two persons, and that the author of the *Volsung Saga* first combined them into one. This opinion was expressed, for instance, by B. Sijmons, in one of the first exhaustive studies of the Saga in comparison with the *Edda*. He remarks that the identification of the two women causes trouble in the latter part of the tale, and there is much which seems to justify his point of view. Other scholars—for instance, Panzer and Jiriczek—have maintained that in märchen or other popular tales which tell of an awakening such as Sigrdrifa's, no hero ever fails to marry the heroine, nor should he here; and moreover that certain strophes of *Brynhild's Hell-Ride* force us to assume that he did betroth himself to her under just such circumstances. It has also been suggested by H. Schneider that it was the collector of the Eddic lays who first made the two heroines out of one because he found inconsistencies in her story, and that the author of the *Volsung Saga* was returning to more authentic tradition in the shape of a lost *Saga of Sigurd* when he rejected Sigrdrifa and kept only Brynhild. How-

ever that may be, the identification of Sigrdrifa and Brynhild is on the whole a great improvement; although it does not eliminate all inconsistencies, it unifies and simplifies the life of the hero.

We know nothing of any older literary treatment of the Volsung story, if such existed, but we do know something of the origins of the material, and it is not impossible to form some idea how it was drawn together to compose the legend as we now have it. For the deeds of Sigurd's youth—the killing of the dragon, the winning of the gold, and the awakening of the sleeping maiden—there are many parallels in märchen and folk-lore. The earlier history of the gold, which had served to ransom the gods Odin, Hoenir, and Loki, connects it with Scandinavian mythology. Finally, many of the characters are historical personages of the age of the Teutonic migrations; princes and leaders who in reality were separated by centuries, meet here as contemporaries. King Atli is Attila the Hun, who invaded Europe in the first half of the fifth century. King Gjuki and his sons Gunnar and Gutthorm, who appear in the Middle High German *Nibelungen Nôt* as Gibich, Gunther, Gerhot, and a third son Giselher, are to be recognized as the Burgundian princes Gibica, Gundahari, Godomar, and Gislahari, whose names are recorded in

the *Lex Burgundionum*. The murder of Gunnar and his half-brother Hogni by Atli, after the death of all their men, is a survival in tradition of the historical destruction of the Burgundian kingdom of Worms at the hands of the Huns in 437; although Attila himself had nothing to do with this, it was natural that his name should later be connected with the event. Jormunrek, the husband of Sigurd's daughter Swanhild, is Ermanarich, King of the Goths in Southern Russia during the latter part of the fourth century. Two centuries after his death the Gothic historian Jordanes reported that Ermanarich had caused a woman named Sunilda to be torn to pieces by horses because of the treason of her husband, and that her two brothers Sarus and Ammius seriously wounded the King in an attempt to avenge their sister. This is obviously the kernel of the episode which concludes the *Volsung Saga;* Sunilda, Sarus, and Ammius may be identified with Swanhild, Sorli, and Hamdir; but the historicity of Jordanes's account is open to serious doubt. Less certain is the identification of Gudrun with a Germanic princess Hildico whom Attila married in 453. The fact that he was found dead of a hemorrhage next morning might well give rise to the tale that his bride had murdered him, perhaps to gain revenge for some family grievance, and the incident is

reported so by Marcellinus Comes, an historian of the next century. But Hildico and Gudrun are not the same name; the connection is made therefore with Kriemhild, who takes Gudrun's place in the Middle High German poem, since the second element of her name is the word *hild* (battle), of which Hildico is a diminutive. For Sigurd there is no certain historical origin, although there are some vague resemblances to his death in the fate which overtook the Frankish King Sigibert, married to a certain Brunihildis, who was murdered at the instigation of the cruel Fredegunde. But all attempts to prove either this or any other identification remain unconvincing. Sigurd is primarily a märchen hero; if some of the incidents of his later life are borrowed from history, they are not recognizable now.

In taking over this variegated material from the poems of the *Edda* and transforming it into a prose saga—the equivalent of a modern novel—the Saga-man shows no little literary skill. He was discriminating enough to recognize and retain the best scenes of his source almost unchanged, and he was skilful enough to combine them in an unbroken, unified narrative. He knew how to make good use of dramatic effects. If the authors of the lays had dwelt lovingly on motives of fierce sorrow, revenge, and despair, the

Sagaman does so no less than they, and he is just as able in building his narrative up to a climax of conflicting forces, followed by a catastrophic destruction. An excellent example is the scene in which Signy, having accomplished the revenge for her father's death with unflinching cruelty, turns her back on life and enters the burning hall to die with the husband whom she has always bitterly hated. One feels that life would indeed be meaningless thereafter for a woman who could concentrate with such unrelenting intensity, and for so many years, upon the annihilation of King Siggeir and his race. Gudrun's avenging of her brothers' death upon King Atli forms a similar climax; and the most dramatic culmination of all is the destruction of Gunnar and Hogni and their men at Atli's court. This is prepared very carefully, with warnings and dreams and premonitions which serve to increase the suspense. The actual destruction is rather briefly described, but the unflinching steadfastness of Gunnar and Hogni in the face of torture and death make their end most impressive.

The characters are vividly delineated, chiefly by means of dialogue. The chief conversations between Brynhild and Gudrun (which are lacking in the *Edda* as we have it) give complete portraits of the two women, first before there has been cause for enmity

between them, and later when taunts and jealous reproaches fly fast between them. Every sentence is in accord with a clear and consistent idea of the speaker's character. The vacillating Gunnar is described in one brief statement: "He knew not what was best to do, for he was bound to Sigurd by oaths; but his mind was vexed with many changes, and it seemed to him the greatest shame if his wife should leave him"—as she threatens to do if he will not kill Sigurd. Needless to say, he ends by doing his wife's will. In fact, the women of the Saga have remarkably dominating personalities, all of them; and more than once they excel the men in their powerful and realistic grasp of a situation. It is Signy who orders Sigmund to slay her unworthy sons, and who calmly resorts to incest in order to obtain a worthy avenger of her father; it is Grimhild who controls the behavior of her husband and sons, and plans their very treacheries for them; it is Gudrun who shoulders the task of revenge for her kin twice over, at the price of the lives most dear to her.

Most forbidding and yet most admirable of all is Brynhild, who is even less inclined than the others to make compromise with an unpleasant truth. Her character is brilliantly drawn in the conversation in Chapter XXXIX, where she talks to Sigurd for the

first time after discovering his lack of faith towards her. From the first she brushes aside his pretenses and his insincere cheerfulness until he becomes as somber and honest in speech as she. It must be confessed that Sigurd does not appear to very great advantage when he is first confronted with her merciless truth-telling. To his pose of friendly encouragement, "Cast off thy sorrow and be glad!" she replies directly: "How is it thou darest to come and see me? None deceived me worse than thou"; to the false innocence of his question, "What vexes thee?" she answers grimly: "I shall tell thee the cause of my wrath!" Finally he replies in her own vein, for when she says, "Most bitter of all my woes it is that I might not contrive to stain a sharp sword with thy blood," he replies calmly, with prophetic certainty, "Have no fear; in a short time from now a sharp sword will indeed stand in my heart." Yet he is not reconciled to her simple and tragic view of the situation, and he actually suggests the compromise of a surreptitious love-affair. This provokes one of her best replies: "I will not have two husbands in the same hall," and Sigurd leaves her distinctly beaten. It is too bad that we do not have the poem upon which this chapter is based, so that we could know how much of the trenchant dialogue is original with the Sagaman. Whether or not he cre-

ated it, however, he seems to have been aware that he was dealing with an unusual study in human nature. Later, after Sigurd's death, he describes Brynhild's terrible laughter followed by her great woe, and he says, "No man could understand why Brynhild had ordered with laughter the deed that she now lamented with tears." This is the comment of either a very naïve or a very sophisticated observer. It is not clear whether he himself "understood" or not.

The Saga contains many references to an inevitable fate, often clearly foreseen, which mere struggling human beings can in no way avoid. Here again it is most often the women who can see into the future, and therefore they often speak with great authority, even though their warnings are seldom heeded by their fathers, husbands, or brothers. Signy announces that evil will come of her marriage with King Siggeir, yet she goes with him uncomplainingly when her father insists; the wives of Gunnar and Hogni foretell certain death for them at the court of King Atli, yet the visit must be made because the honor of heroes is involved. One perceives that the two men are entirely convinced by their wives' dreams and prophecies, though they pretend there is no cause for fear. Brynhild also looks into the future when she betroths herself to Sigurd: she knows beforehand the tragic doom

that is to overtake them, and for that reason she accepts his oaths, not with joyous belief, but with heavy-hearted doubt. "It is not fated that we dwell together," says she; and when they plight their troth she knows already that he will go to Gudrun. It seems to be a conventional trait of persons of heroic stature that they foresee an evil destiny, but proudly refuse to modify their behavior accordingly. They do not often struggle, as Greek heroes did, to cut through the mesh of unavoidable events. When Fafnir warns Sigurd that the gold will cause his death, the hero replies imperturbably that this is not a sufficient reason for changing his course of conduct. "Each man would keep his riches to the final day, and all must die at some time." When the gold does cause his death at the hands of his wife's kin, his comment is: "No man may struggle against his fate."

A proud refusal to struggle against fate seems to have been one of the most admired characteristics of Icelandic heroes in general. To go unflinchingly to their doom with full foreknowledge of it was the only way of proving themselves superior to it. They defied their fate by accepting it. There are many instances of this attitude outside the *Volsung Saga,* but it is not necessary to cite them here. No better example can be found than Hogni's end at the court of King

Atli. Despite all warnings, the hero insists upon journeying thither; when he is attacked, he defends himself valiantly; but being captured, he expresses contemptuous indifference to his fate. "He cared little to go on with the game," says the Saga. His attitude is brought out sharply by contrast with the cowardice of a thrall named Hjalli. One of Atli's councillors proposes that this man, a swine-herd, shall be put to death in Hogni's stead; thereupon the simple thrall, who has no taste for heroic gestures, runs about in a panic of fear, shouting that "he had had but plague and ill fortune of their fighting" and that "it was an evil day when he had to die and leave his good food and his swine-keeping." When he is caught he screams aloud even before he feels the edge of the knife. Then Hogni, the true hero, speaks, and asks to have the thrall's life spared because he cannot endure Hjalli's shrieks, but would rather die and spare the other for his precious food and swine-keeping. Hogni scorns Hjalli, not so much for his fear of death, as for his attachment to a worthless life. It would be difficult to find another episode in literature which so forcefully expresses the proud superiority of a warlike aristocracy, not only towards the class of thralls, but also towards life as a whole. As Atli's councillor says, "The thrall is fit to die, for no matter how long he

lives he will ever be wretched." A hero, on the other hand, knows that life is not worth cherishing, and therefore he ceases to be wretched. It is a sort of philosophical pessimism which makes him a hero.

One must be aware of this attitude underlying many of the Icelandic sagas if one is to read them with understanding. Otherwise it may seem that the authors reveled too much in sensation and horrors, and that they introduced details so gruesome as to violate good taste. This accusation has been brought against the *Volsung Saga* in particular by modern critics. But it must be remembered that the question of good taste is always relative to a given epoch in literary history; and moreover, the so-called sensationalism of many of the sagas seems to have been used deliberately to bring out the superiority of the heroic will to horrible circumstances. When Hogni laughs as his heart is being cut out; when Gunnar plays his harp in the pit of snakes; when warriors in other sagas summon their last strength and breath before dying of ghastly wounds in order to utter a humorous epigram, they are proving their invincibility even in defeat. The more harrowing the circumstances, the more triumphant their vindication. It may be partly for this reason that the scenes of destruction in the sagas are made so sanguinary and cruel, according to our ideas.

As a matter of fact, such scenes were rather conventional in the literature of the time. They must have been popular, else they would not have been repeated so often. The ones contained in the *Volsung Saga* are as dramatic and as intense as any, and they appear in a narrative which is well told from beginning to end. If it were not for its author, the whole of the splendid story of Sigurd's race would have reached us in fragments instead of being preserved entire; we have therefore many reasons for being indebted to him.

We are indirectly indebted to him for much more than the story he himself wrote, for without his version of the Nibelung material we should never have had a number of modern works of art in their present form. The best known of these are William Morris's *Sigurd the Volsung,* Ibsen's *Vikings of Helgeland,* and Richard Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen.* The poem by Morris is so faithful to the Saga that it may be said that spirit and action remain the same, and only the poetic form is different. In places it is a fairly close rewording of the Icelandic. But the stirring music of his verse has made of this loyal paraphrase a new and impressive work of art. Morris has even heightened the heroic and supernatural qualities of his original, so that his characters appear as

fabulous demigods of a remote age of the world's history, when heaven and earth were nearer than they are now. Ibsen, on the other hand, had used only that part of the story which is entirely human: the marriages of Gunnar and Sigurd, and the rivalry of their wives. Being interested chiefly in the emotional conflicts caused by this situation, and in the contrast of characters, he has made no use whatsoever of such supernatural episodes as Sigurd's slaying of the dragon, and for the magic fire surrounding Brynhild's mountain, he has substituted a polar bear guarding the bower of a very human maiden. The action is transferred to the period of the colonization of Iceland, and the dialogue recalls the genealogical sagas dealing with that time. Ibsen has contrived to make the ideals of the Viking age seem near and real through his characters, but that is not all. He gives a brilliant analysis of the psychological complications involved in the marriages of Sigurd and Gunnar; and that is what makes the play more significant than a mere reproduction of his source would have been. One can recognize here the future author of *A Doll's House*.

As for Wagner's cycle, the *Volsung Saga* supplied it with the essentials for the second of the operas,

Die Walküre. From the two Eddas, poetic and prose, Wagner could have gained all he needed to create his *Rheingold, Siegfried,* and *Götterdämmerung,* but without the Saga we might never have had the story of Siegfried's parents and their tragic struggle against gods and men. Having planned the career of the triumphant hero who is to destroy the power of greed on earth—for such is the theme of the opera *Siegfried*—Wagner projected an introductory drama to account for the origins of the young iconoclast. In the Saga he found the outlines of a tale which could be made to fit into his scheme. He found Sigmund, the savage outcast, the slayer of his sister's children, intent solely upon revenge and the regaining of power. What kindled Wagner's imagination was apparently Sigmund the exile, a "wolf" living alone in the wilderness and abiding the time when he might attain his desires. Out of this figure Wagner made his Siegmund, also an exile and outcast from men, but for very different reasons. Siegmund is a rebel against injustice, a champion of lost causes, fatally sure to earn persecution and death because of his attempts to change tyranny and wrong into justice and right. The opera is the history of his conflict with convention and power: that is, with Hunding and the gods. He says of himself:

Immer doch war ich geächtet:
Unheil lag auf mir.
Was Rechtes je ich riet,
andern dünkte es arg,
was schlimm immer mir schien,
andere gaben ihm Gunst . . .
drum musst' ich Wehwalt mich nennen;
des Wehes walte ich nur!

It is because of an attempt to protect weakness against tyranny that he is driven by storm and need to the house of Hunding, and he discovers all too soon that he is being harbored by one who is bitterly opposed to him and his heroic protests. Hunding has heard of the Volsung race, and he heartily detests it:

Nicht heilig ist ihm, was andern hehr:
verhasst ist es allen, und mir!

Inevitably the rebel Siegmund embroils himself with this representative of established order; he violates all the conventions of property and marriage by carrying off Hunding's wife Sieglinde, his own sister, to be his bride; and so he finds himself involved in conflict with the very gods from whom he has sprung. Rejected by men and gods alike, he must fall in combat with Hunding, by Wotan's express command; it is a heroic death, but very different from the heroic death of Hogni in the *Volsung Saga*. Hogni dies con-

temptuously, defiantly, reducing to nothing the life he leaves behind him by his laughter and scornful words; Siegmund dies hopefully, in an exalted attempt to achieve victory against the overwhelming odds of power and greed. If he fails, it is in behalf of a positive principle, not a negation. To the last moment he finds it supremely worth while to fight; and when the sword falls broken from his hands, splintered against Hunding's spear, it is preserved to be used by his son in a more successful fight against the same powers.

For many reasons, then, the *Volsung Saga* still deserves to be read to-day. The present translation is not the first to be made for English readers, for there is another by William Morris under the title *The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs*. This was the work of a poet and lover of Scandinavian lore; it was reverently done, with acute understanding of the language, and great sensitiveness to the beauty of the original. It may be wondered, therefore, why anyone should presume to make a new one now. In the first place, Morris's version is no longer as accessible as such an important text surely deserves to be; and in the second, the excessively archaic language he chose to employ, out of very respect for his original, is unfortunately all but incomprehensible in places,

especially to a reader who does not know Old English. I have compared his translation with the Icelandic, after making my own, and I am convinced that his work was essentially accurate; but there are some sentences so obscure in the English that I really could not be certain whether the fault lay in his understanding of the Icelandic or (more probably) my understanding of him. The story does require a slightly archaic style, I think, because even to the Sagaman it was a tale of remote, ancient days, of gods and demigods and half-mythical kings; but I have tried to avoid any expressions not immediately understandable to a modern reader, and I have confined most archaic locutions to the dialogue. It is the greatest compliment possible to the story to let it speak for itself, for the theme is perennially interesting and the emotions concerned are universal.

II

THE SAGA OF RAGNAR LODBROK AND THE LAY OF KRAKA

THE *Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok* deals with the exploits of the legendary king of that name, and the careers and deaths of his six sons. Since

Ragnar's second wife is Aslaug (also called Kraka), the daughter of Sigurd and Brynhild, the Saga may be regarded as a sequel to the *Volsung Saga,* connecting the latter with the historical Norwegian dynasty of kings. In fact, the *Ragnar's Saga* appears as a direct continuation of the *Volsung Saga* in the only parchment manuscript of the latter which we have;[1] the text proceeds without interruption, and only a small space is left for the new title. The heroine, Aslaug, appears to have been an invention on the part of the author of the *Volsung Saga,* for she is unknown to the *Poetic Edda,* which says nothing of any child of Sigurd and Brynhild. It seems probable, therefore, that the author introduced her deliberately in order to prepare for the *Ragnar's Saga.* Edzardi, who translated the two sagas into German, maintained that the second of them was never an independent story, but was created by the author. He pointed out striking parallelisms in wording between the two, and suggested that the undoubtedly inferior style of the second could be explained simply by the fact that the author could work very well when he was using

[1] Royal Library, Copenhagen, Ny kgl. Sml. 1824b, 4to. The manuscript is fully described in Magnus Olsen's edition of the two sagas for the Samfund til Udgivelse af gammel nordisk Litteratur, Copenhagen 1906, Introduction. All the paper MSS. are more recent, and are derived from the parchment one.

a good literary source, but he was timid, repetitious, and unoriginal when he worked alone.

But it must not be thought that there were absolutely no sources for the *Ragnar's Saga;* Edzardi's remarks give a false impression of the matter. The *Chronicle of Roskilde* (ca. 1140) and Adam of Bremen both mention Ragnar and his sons, and Saxo Grammaticus gives a long account of their deeds, which has been carefully analysed by Axel Olrik in an attempt to discover the origins of its separate parts. More recently, Professor Jan de Vries of Leyden has devoted a series of important articles to the *Ragnar's Saga,* which make it appear even less likely that Edzardi was right in claiming originality for the author. He is of the opinion that the tradition had a fairly long development, partly literary and partly popular, before it was used by the Sagaman, and that the Volsung story and the Ragnar story influenced one another during their parallel growth, even before they were united by the unskilful author who composed the transitional chapter which connects the two sagas. The argument is strengthened by the fact that the second chapter does indeed begin like an independent saga, with the orthodox formula so often used in Icelandic literature: "Herruad was the name of a rich and mighty jarl. . . ." This is the real beginning;

the chapter which precedes may with some justification be regarded as part of the *Volsung Saga,* although the manuscript gives it to the *Ragnar's Saga.*

The historical elements of the Saga are curiously combined with pure fiction. The sons of Ragnar were historical vikings: Björn Járnsída is mentioned in Frankish annals, and the raids of "Ingvar" and "Ubba" in Northumbria are attested by English chronicles. These two vikings appeared in York in 866 and killed King Ælla, who had but recently taken the power from Osbriht. Later sources (Asser and Abbo of Fleury) attribute the death of King Edmund of East Anglia to the same invaders. De Vries suggests that it was in England, among Scandinavian settlers, that the legend first developed, which supplied so admirable a motive as revenge for a father's death to explain the invasion by these two vikings. Thus the execution of Ragnar and the expedition of his sons is the oldest part of the story, and it was only later that Ragnar himself became a person of primary importance. Originally it was his chief function to be killed; only later were youthful exploits attributed to him.

The adventures connected with Ragnar's two wives are non-historical, and belong to the realm of märchen. The story of Kraka (Aslaug), who fulfils

the King's seemingly impossible conditions concerning the manner in which she is to appear before him, is a variant of the motive represented by *Die kluge Bauerntochter* in Grimm's *Kinder und Hausmärchen*, modified for the purposes of the Saga. The same sort of formula—"she shall come to me neither walking nor riding, neither naked nor clothed," and so forth —is found in Celtic popular tales relating to the elopement of Diarmuid and Grainne; here it is more logically used than in the Saga, for the hero imposes the conditions in order to prevent an elopement for which he has no desire, whereas Ragnar is eager to have Kraka come to him, and it is hard to understand why he should wilfully put difficulties in her way. It may be, therefore, that there is a closer relation of the Saga to the Celtic tale than to the German märchen and its analogues, comparatively few of which are to be found in Scandinavia.

The story of Thora, Ragnar's first wife, is a variant of the Perseus märchen about the maiden rescued from a tremendous serpent by a modest hero who at first refrains from claiming his just reward, and who must prove his right to it later by producing evidence that he, and no other, killed the monster. One purpose of the adventure in the Saga is to give an explanation of the epithet Lodbrok. An interesting parallel is to

be found in an Icelandic märchen called *The Snake in Lagarflod*.[2] This tells of a girl who received some gold from her mother; she asks what she shall do with it to gain the greatest benefit from it, and her mother replies: "Lay it under a ling-worm." The girl thereupon puts both the gold and the snake into a box, but when she next looks at them the creature has grown so great that the box is almost burst. She throws them both into a river, where the snake continues to grow. Although two Finns succeed in binding it fast under the water, no one is able to kill it, and it has remained there to this very day.—The similarity to the tale of Thora is obvious.[3]

Especially interesting are the episodes modelled on the *Volsung Saga*. The death of Ragnar in the pit of snakes is clearly an imitation of Gunnar's end, but

[2] *Islandske Folkesagn og Æventyr*, Danish translation by Carl Andersen, Copenhagen 1877, pp. 206 ff.

[3] For other episodes various origins have been suggested. The curious prophecy made by Aslaug on her wedding night is clearly meant to explain the epithet "the Boneless" which was attached to her first son. De Vries has ingeniously proposed that the epithet, in its turn, is due to a misunderstanding of a learned written source, in which the Latin *exos* ("boneless") was read for *exosus* (abbreviated *exos*), meaning "very cruel." Details of the expedition of Ragnar's sons to the South may be derived from the reports of pilgrims; and the parallels to Geoffrey of Monmouth (the story of Ivar's acquisition of as much land "as was covered by the largest ox-hide he could find," Chapter XVII, and of his burial, Chapter XVIII, point to English tradition, whether popular or literary. And there are Irish precedents for the manner in which Ragnar's sons receive the news of his death.

it seems far less needful or inevitable, since Ella expressly wished to have him spared, and the attendants were stupid indeed not to recognize him, in spite of his obstinate silence. Aslaug is perhaps meant to be a second Gudrun: it is she who whets her stepsons to avenge their brothers, and she exults in the unflinching fortitude with which Hvitserk meets his self-imposed death. Typical also is her comment on Rognvald's end: "I do not see that he could have lived for greater glory." This might have been said by the grimmest of the characters in the *Volsung Saga.* But though there is an attempt to imitate the fierce defiance of life, the worship of glory and heroism to the point of self-destruction, which are so characteristic of the *Volsung Saga,* the treatment of similar themes in the *Ragnar's Saga* is strained and unconvincing. From a literary point of view it is far inferior to the tale it continues. The people are not consistent personalities, Aslaug herself least of all; and the action is inorganic and episodic until near the end. There are no imposing climaxes carefully prepared as in the *Volsung Saga,* the only action of any moment being the narrative of two fairly conventional expeditions of revenge. Yet this Saga has come down to us so closely connected with the *Volsung Saga* that the two should be presented together. It is interesting, moreover,

because it contains a certain amount of genuine historical tradition about the Danish raids in Northumbria in the ninth century, and because it does after a fashion attempt to glorify the heroic attitude in many of its characters. Even if it is, like so many a sequel, inferior to its predecessor, it does possess some of the adventurous spirit of the Viking Age.

The Lay of Kraka is a poem composed, according to Olrik, in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, which also treats of the deeds of Ragnar and his sons. It is an autobiographical song supposed to be chanted by Ragnar as he lies in the pit of snakes, awaiting his death. He recounts the many exploits of his youth, and tells of the battles in which he and his sons fought together; but since all of these do not correspond to the ones mentioned in the Saga, the author of the poem must have followed a different tradition. The descriptions are monotonous enough, being composed of the most conventional expressions about blood and steel, ravens and wolves, swords and helmets, which were the common property of the scaldic poets. But at the close of his reminiscences, beginning with stanza 21, the old warrior ceases his catalogue of fights and gives us an affirmation of his faith, which is a characteristic mixture of fatalism and defiance. There is no use trying to escape your

doom, he says, but you can at least make things very uncomfortable for the enemy before you succumb. The brave man rejoices in the opportunity to show himself stronger than his fate, and he looks forward to meeting the gods in Valhalla as his peers: "I shall not enter in like a man afraid." This last section of the poem expresses the Viking spirit even better than does the Saga; and it therefore deserves to be read along with the prose tale by those who are curious to understand the ideals of the warlike Scandinavians during an adventurous and exciting age.

THE SAGA OF THE VOLSUNGS

THE SAGA OF THE VOLSUNGS

CHAPTER I

HERE the saga begins and tells of a man called Sigi, who was reported to be the son of Odin. The saga tells also of another man named Skadi; he was a rich man and powerful, but Sigi was the richer and nobler born, according to the speech of men in those days. Skadi had a thrall named Bredi, who is worth mentioning in this tale: he was well-instructed in the things he had to do; in skill and strength he equalled or mayhap surpassed those who were thought more worthy than he.

Now it is to be told that upon a certain time Sigi went hunting, and the thrall with him, and they chased game all day long until evening. And when they gathered their booty together in the evening, Bredi had more and greater quarry than Sigi. He took it very ill that a thrall should have hunted

better than he; and therewith he fell upon him and killed him, and he hid the body in a snowdrift. Then he went home in the evening and said that Bredi had ridden away from him in the wood: "and he vanished suddenly from my sight, and I know nought of him." Skadi mistrusted this story of Sigi's; he guessed that there was foul play and that Sigi had killed him. He gathered men to search for him, and the end of their quest was that they found him in a snowdrift; and Skadi said that that drift should evermore be called by Bredi's name; and so men have done since, and they call every large snowdrift so.

So it came out that Sigi had slain and murdered the thrall. Therefore they declared him a wolf and an exile from holy places, and he might no longer be at home with his father. Odin followed him out of the land a great way, and he did not leave him until he had found him some warships. Now Sigi went a-harrying with the host that his father had given him before they parted, and he was ever victorious in his raids; and such was his fortune that at the last he conquered him a land and kingdom, and thereafter he made a noble marriage; and he became a rich and mighty king. He ruled over Hunland and was a great warrior. He had a son by his

wife, called Rerir, who grew up there with his father and speedily waxed doughty and great.

Now Sigi began to grow old. He had many foes, so that at the last those men that he trusted most, his wife's brothers, fell upon him when he was least on his guard and had but few men about him; they overpowered him with greater numbers, and in that fight fell Sigi with all his good men. Rerir his son was not present at that slaying; but he gathered so great a band of friends and chieftains of the country that he gained him both land and kingship after Sigi his father. And when he had made sure of his realm he called to mind the feud that he had against his mother's brothers, who had slain his sire; so he gathered a great host and attacked his kinsmen therewith; and they were by all seeming the first to misdo, though he likewise valued their kinship but little: and so he wrought that before they parted he slew all those who were his father's bane, though it were an unfitting deed in every way. And then he took over the lordship and land and the wealth, and he made himself a mightier man than his father.

Rerir won himself great booty, and likewise a wife who seemed to him fitly matched with him; but they were together a long time and yet they had no child or heir. This irked them sore, and they

prayed the gods right earnestly that they might have a child. Now it is told that Frigga heard their prayer and told Odin what they asked, and he was ready with good counsel thereto. He called a wish-maiden of his, daughter of Hrimnir the giant, and put into her hand an apple; this he bade her take to the King. She put on her mantle of crow's feathers and flew until she found the King, who was sitting on a mound. She let the apple fall down on his knee; he took it up, and it seemed to him that he knew what end it would serve. He went home from the mound to his men, and there he met the Queen, and he ate some part of that apple, and she likewise.

CHAPTER II

NOW it is to be told that the Queen soon discovered that she must be with child, but a long time passed, and still she might not be delivered. Then it came to pass that Rerir must needs go to war, as is the wont of kings, to keep peace in his own land; and on that journey of his the tidings were told that Rerir took sick and died, being resolved to go home to Odin: to many that seemed a most desirable thing in those days.

But the Queen's sickness went on as before, nor could she bear her child; and this lasted six years. Now she knew that she could not live long, and so she bade them cut out the child, and it was so done. The child was a boy, and he was very large when he was brought forth, as was to be expected. It is said that the boy kissed his mother before she died. A name was given to him and he was called Volsung; he was king in Hunland after his father. Very early he was strong and large and bold in all things requiring manhood and courage; he became the greatest warrior, always victorious in battles he fought when he went a-harrying.

Now when he had come to man's estate, Hrimnir the giant sent him his daughter Hljod, who was mentioned before when she went with the apple to Rerir, Volsung's father. Therewith he wedded her, and they dwelt long together in good fellowship. They had ten sons and a daughter; the eldest son was called Sigmund, and Signy the daughter, and these two were twins, the fairest and foremost in all ways of the children of King Volsung. Yet all of them were mighty heroes, for great is the praise and many are the tales that men have long since told of the proud sons of King Volsung, and how they surpassed most of the men that are told of in ancient

sagas, both in knowledge and skill and all sorts of feats of prowess. It is said that King Volsung let build an excellent hall in such wise that a great oak stood in the midst of it, and the limbs of the tree with their fair blooms upon them reached out over the roof of the hall, and the trunk was within; and they called the tree Branstock.

CHAPTER III

SIGGEIR was the name of a king who ruled over Gautland; he was rich and had many followers. This Siggeir journeyed to Volsung and asked his daughter of him in marriage, and the King received his wooing favorably, as did his sons likewise; she herself was unwilling, but she bade her father rule in this matter, as in all else that concerned her. It seemed wise to the King to wed her, and so she was pledged to King Siggeir. But for the feast and the wedding King Siggeir was to fare as guest to King Volsung. The King made ready for the feast with the best of good cheer, and when it was ready, the guests of both Volsung and Siggeir came together at the appointed day, and King Siggeir had many worshipful men with him.

It is said that many fires were kindled down the length of the hall, but the great tree stood in the midst of it, as was said before.

Now it is told that as men sat about the fire in the evening, a strange man came into the hall, and such was his attire that he wore a spotted cape with a hood; he was barefooted and wore linen breeks bound at the knee and a wide hat on his head. He was very hoary and aged, and had but one eye. The man carried a sword in his hand: this sword he raised aloft, and thrust it so far into the tree-trunk that it sank into the very hilt. All men held back from welcoming this stranger. He spoke to them then and said:

"He who can draw forth this sword from the tree shall have it of me as gift; and he shall find in truth that he never bore better sword in his hand than this one." Thereafter the ancient man went out of the hall, and none knew who he was or where he went. The men arose and delayed not to grasp at the sword, and he was thought to have the best of it who could reach it first. The noblest men went first, one after the other, but none might even cause it to quiver but a little bit when they laid hands on it. But now came Sigmund, son of King Volsung, and took the sword and drew it out of the tree-trunk,

and it was as if it lay loose there for him. Each man thought that weapon so good that he had never seen its like before. Siggeir offered to give him thrice its weight in gold. Sigmund said,

"Thou couldst have taken that sword no less than I while it rested there, if it had befitted thee to bear it; but now thou shalt never have it, since it has already come to my hand, even though thou shouldst offer me all the gold thou hast."

King Siggeir was wroth at these words, and it seemed to him that he had received a very scornful answer; but since he was by nature a very crafty man, he acted now as if he had not heard that speech; and yet that same evening he pondered on a reward for it which later came to pass.

CHAPTER IV

NOW it is to be said that King Siggeir went to bed by Signy that night; but the next day after, since there was fair weather, King Siggeir said that he would straightway go home and not wait till a time when the winds grew strong and the sea impassable. And it is not related that King Volsung or his sons tried to hinder him, the more

as they saw that he wished nothing else than to depart from the feast. Then Signy spoke to her father:

"I have no wish to depart with Siggeir, nor do my thoughts laugh towards him, but I know this by the foresight that lies in our family, that great sorrow will come to us if we do not quickly undo this marriage."

"Thou shouldst not say that, daughter," said he, "for it would be great shame both for him and for us to break it off without cause, nor would we have faith or friendship of him if it is voided, but he would repay us ill if he might; and it befits us to hold to our side of the pact."

Now King Siggeir made ready for the homeward journey; and before they departed from the feast he invited King Volsung his father-in-law to visit him in Gautland after a space of three months, together with all his sons and with as many followers as he might desire and find needful for the journey. In this wise King Siggeir wished to make good the slight he gave to the marriage feast in that he hastened away after one night, for it is not men's custom to do so. King Volsung promised to come on the day that was named; and so they parted and King Siggeir journeyed home with his wife.

CHAPTER V

NOW it is to be told of King Volsung and of his sons that they journeyed to Gautland at the appointed time on the bidding of Siggeir, his son-in-law. They set sail from their land in three ships, all well provided. After a favorable voyage they came to Gautland late in the day. But that same evening came Signy, daughter of King Volsung, and called aside her father and brothers to speak with them alone, and told them the intent of King Siggeir: "He has gathered together an unmatched host and he intends to betray you. And now I beg you," said she, "to journey back again to your kingdom, and gather so many men as ye can and return hither afterwards to avenge yourselves; but enter not into this trap, for ye shall not escape treachery if ye will not follow the counsel that I offer you." Then said King Volsung,

"All men will report that as unborn babe I spoke and swore an oath, that I would flee from neither fire nor steel for the sake of fear, and so I have ever done until now; why therefore should I not fulfill it in my old age? And never shall maidens mock my sons at game because they were afeared of their death, for every man must die once, and no man may avoid

death when his time is come. It is my counsel that we flee not at all, but use our hands as boldly as ever we may: I have gone into a hundred battles, and at times I have had greater numbers, and at others less, but always the victory was mine; and it shall not be said that I now flee or beg for peace."

Signy wept sorely and begged him not to go to meet King Siggeir. King Volsung answered her, "Surely thou shalt go home to thy husband and abide with him, however it may go with us."

So Signy went home, and they remained behind there that night. But in the morning when dawn came, King Volsung bade all his men arise and go ashore and make ready for battle. So they went up on the land all weaponed, nor did they have long to wait before King Siggeir came with all his host, and there was a bitter combat between them. The King urged his men on most hardily, and it is said that King Volsung and his sons charged eight times that day through King Siggeir's folk, and smote them with both hands; but when they thought to do it one time more, King Volsung fell in the midst of his people and all his men with him except his ten sons, since there was greater strength against them than they might well withstand.

Now all his sons were taken and put in bonds and

led away. Signy heard that her father was slain and her brothers bound and doomed to death; she bade King Siggeir come and speak with her alone, and said,

"I ask this of thee, that thou wilt not straightway have my brothers killed, but rather set them in stocks, for it is with me as the proverb says, that fain is the eye of what it yet sees, and therefore I ask no further grace for them, since I know it would avail me little." Then Siggeir answered,

"Mad art thou and scanty of wit that thou shouldst beg for thy brothers more torment than being slain; and yet it shall be granted thee, for it seems better to me that they suffer more and suffer greater anguish before death."

So he had it done as she asked of him; a great stock was taken and put upon the feet of the ten brothers in a certain place in the wood, and there they sat all that day until the night. But at midnight there came an old she-wolf to them from the forest as they sat in their stocks; she was both great and fierce, and she straightway bit one of them to death; and after that she ate him up entire and then went away.

The next morning Signy sent out to her brothers the man whom she most trusted, to find out what had

befallen; but when he came back he told her that one of them was dead. She thought it a grievous harm if all of them should fare so, but she might not help them. In short space their fate can be told: nine nights in all that same she-wolf came at midnight and ate one of them each time, until all of them were slain except Sigmund alone. And now when the tenth night came, Signy sent the faithful vassal to her brother Sigmund; and she put honey into his hand, saying that he should smear it on Sigmund's face and lay some of it in his mouth. Then he went out to Sigmund and did as he was commanded; and then he went home.

And the next night the same she-wolf came as she was wont and thought to bite him to death like his brothers; but now she scented the honey from him, and so she licked all of his face with her tongue and thereafter thrust her tongue into his mouth. Sigmund took no fright, but bit hard on the tongue of the wolf. She started and pulled fiercely away, and thrust her feet on the stock so that it clove all asunder; but he held so fast that the tongue was torn out of her by the roots, and of this she had her death. And it is the saying of some men that that same wolf was the mother of King Siggeir, who had put on this shape for the purpose of trolldom and sorcery.

CHAPTER VI

NOW Sigmund was become free and the stock was riven; and he betook himself into the wood. But Signy sent again to know what had befallen, and whether Sigmund still lived; and when they came he told them what had befallen and how it had fared with him and the wolf. The man went home and told Signy how it was; and she went out to see her brother. They took counsel together and agreed that he should make him an underground house in the wood, and so it went for the time; Signy concealed him there and gave him what he needed, but Siggeir thought that all the Volsungs were dead.

King Siggeir had two sons by his wife, and it is said that when the elder son was ten winters old, Signy sent him out to Sigmund to give him help if he wished to try to avenge his father. So the boy went out to the wood, and he came late in the evening to Sigmund's cave. Sigmund received him fittingly and well, and bade him make bread for the two of them—"for I must be seeking fire-wood," said he; and he put into his hands a bag of meal, and went out himself to fetch the wood. But when he came back the boy had done nothing towards making the bread.

Then Sigmund asked him if the bread were prepared. He said,

"I dared not take the bag of meal, for there lay something living within it." Then Sigmund thought he knew that this boy was not so remarkably brave that he should wish to have him there with him. And when the brother and sister met again, Sigmund told her that he thought he was no nearer to having a man's help even though the boy were there with him. Signy said,

"Take him then and slay him; no need that he live longer." And so he did. So that winter passed, and in the next Signy sent her younger son to Sigmund; but there is no need to lengthen the tale, for it went even as before, and he slew that boy too at the bidding of Signy.

CHAPTER VII

IT is now told that on a certain day when Signy was sitting in her bower, there came to her a witch-woman who was greatly skilled in magic arts. Signy spoke to her and said,

"I desire that we two change shapes." The witch answered,

"It shall be as thou sayest." And so she wrought with her spells that they changed shapes, and the witch sat in the place of Signy by her will and went to bed by the King in the evening, and he did not mark that it was not Signy who was by him.

Now it is to be told of Signy that she went out to her brother's cave and asked him to harbor her for the night: "For I have lost my way out in the wood, and I know not whither I go."

He told her that she should abide there with him; he would not refuse hospitality to her, a woman; and he thought that she would not so ill reward his entertainment as to betray him. So she went into his abode and they sat down to meat; he glanced at her often, and she seemed to him to be a fair woman and comely. And when they had eaten, he told her that he wished them to share one bed that night; and she did not gainsay it. So he put her beside him for three nights together.

After that she went home and found the witch-woman and asked that they change shapes once more; and so they did. And when a certain time had passed, Signy bore a child, and the boy was called Sinfjotli. As he grew up he was both large and strong and fair of face, resembling greatly the race of the Volsungs;

and he was not yet ten winters old before she sent him out to Sigmund's cave. She had tested her former sons before she sent them to Sigmund, in that she made a seam upon them through skin and flesh, but they bore it ill and cried out. Now she did the same with Sinfjotli, and he flinched not; then she flayed the kirtle off him, so that the skin followed the sleeves. She said that that must smart him, but he replied,

"Little must such a smart be to a Volsung!"

And now the boy came to Sigmund, who bade him knead some of the meal while he went out to seek fire-wood; and when he came again, Sinfjotli had done with his baking. Then Sigmund asked him if he had found anything in the meal.

"I rather suspect," said he, "that there was something living in the meal when I first took to kneading it; but I kneaded in whatever was there." Then Sigmund spoke and he laughed aloud therewith, "I do not intend thee to partake of that bread this evening, for thou hast kneaded into it a most venomous snake."

Sigmund was so mighty a man that he could eat poison and be unscathed by it: but Sinfjotli could suffer it to touch him without, though he might not endure to eat it or drink it.

CHAPTER VIII

NOW it is to be told that Sigmund thought Sinfjotli over young to seek revenge with him, but wished first to accustom him to hardship; they fared far and wide in the woods that summer and slew men to gain booty for themselves. Sigmund thought the boy was much like the Volsung race, yet he thought he was the son of King Siggeir, and that he had the evil nature of his father along with the boldness of the Volsungs, nor was he seemingly a man close attached to his kin, since he reminded Sigmund often of his wrongs and whetted him on to slay King Siggeir.

One time as they went through the woods to gain riches for themselves, they chanced upon a house, and found in it two men with great gold rings lying there asleep; these two were kings' sons who had met with an evil fate, for the wolf-skins that they wore were hanging above them, and only every fifth day might they come out of those coverings. Sigmund and Sinfjotli put on skin-shapes, but they could not come forth again, for the skins had the same nature as before. The two howled like wolves, but either understood the other's voice. Now they betook them to the forest and each of them went his way. They were agreed that they should venture fight to as

many as seven men, but no more, and he who was attacked should call out with a wolf's voice.

"Let us not swerve from this," said Sigmund; "since thou art young and bold, men will think it good to hunt thee."

Now each of them went his way, and when they were parted, Sigmund came upon a number of men, and called out with his wolf's voice. When Sinfjotli heard that he came up and slew them all; and again the two parted. And before Sinfjotli had fared long in the wood he met with eleven men and fought with them, and the end of it was that he slew them all. He was sore wounded therewith and went under an oak and rested him there. Then Sigmund came to him and said,

"Why didst thou not call?" Sinfjotli said,

"Thou didst have help in the killing of seven men; I am but a child in years beside thee, yet I asked no help for the killing of eleven."

Sigmund ran at him so hard that he staggered and fell, and he bit him in the forefront of the windpipe. That day they could not come out of their wolf-skins. Sigmund now laid him on his back and bore him home to the hut and watched over him, but he bade the trolls take the wolf-shapes.

One day Sigmund saw two weasels, and one of

them bit the other in the windpipe; then it ran into the wood and fetched a certain leaf and laid it over the sore, and straightway the other weasel sprang up whole and well. Sigmund went out and saw that a raven came flying with a leaf of that plant, which it delivered to him. This he put upon Sinfjotli's sore, and straightway he sprang up whole, as though he had never been wounded. After that they went to the cave and abode there until it was time to come out of the wolves' skins; they took them then and burnt them, praying that they should never harm another man. In their wolf shapes they had done many a great deed in King Siggeir's realm. Sinfjotli was now come to his prime, and Sigmund thought he had fully tested him.

Now in a short time Sigmund wished to be about the avenging of his father, if it might be brought to pass. On a certain day they departed from the cave and they reached Siggeir's dwelling late in the evening; they went into the outer room which was before the great hall; there were beer-casks in it, and there they hid. The Queen knew where they were, and wished to see them; and when she had met them, they agreed that they should avenge their father that night.

Signy and the King had two young children that

were playing on the floor with a golden toy; they cast it over the floor of the hall and ran after it; but of a sudden a golden ring rolled from it and ran into the room farther out where Sigmund and Sinfjotli were, and one of the boys sped after in search of it. Now he saw where two large grim men were sitting, clad in long helmets and white byrnies. He ran back into the hall before his father, and told him what he had seen. Then the King suspected that there must be treason abroad against him. Signy heard what they were saying; she arose and took both children and led them to the two men in the outer room and told them that the children had betrayed them: "and I advise you to slay them," said she. Sigmund said, "I will not slay thy children, though they have told of my hiding place." But Sinfjotli faltered no whit; he drew his sword and slew both children, and cast them into the hall before King Siggeir. Then the King arose and bade his men seize those who had lain hidden in the outer room that evening. The men ran out and sought to take them, but they defended themselves well and manfully, so that those nearest them seemed for a long time to be the worst off; yet at last they were borne down by the greater number and were taken and bound and fettered, and there they remained all that night.

Now the King meditated what long-drawn death he might give them; and when morning cáme, he had a great mound built of turf and stones, and when it was ready he had a stone slab set in the midst of the mound, so that one edge of it was turned upwards, and the other down; it was so great that it touched both walls, and no one could pass by it. Then he caused Sigmund and Sinfjotli to be taken and set in this mound, each one on a side, since it seemed worse to him that they should not be together, and yet each could hear the other speak. And as the men were covering over the mound with turf, Signy came by with some straw in her arms; this she cast into the mound to Sinfjotli, and bade the thralls conceal this from the King; to this they agreed, and so the mound was closed. And when night was come, Sinfjotli said to Sigmund,

"I do not think we shall be short of meat for a while, for the Queen has thrown some flesh into the cave, and wrapped about it some straw"; and again he felt about the meat, and found that Sigmund's sword was thrust into it: he knew it only by the hilt, since it was dark in the cave. He told this to Sigmund, and they both rejoiced. Now Sinfjotli thrust the sword-point over above the slab and pulled hard upon it, and the sword bit into the rock. Sigmund now took the

sword-point, and so they sawed the rock between them, and they ceased not before the sawing was done, as the stave tells:

Sigmund sawed with his sword amain,
And Sinfjotli; the rock was in twain.

And now they were both loose in the mound, and they sawed through both iron and stone until they came out of it.

Then they went to the King's hall, where the men were all lying asleep. They carried wood to the hall and set fire to it. Those within were awakened by the smoke and the flaming of the hall over them. The King called out and asked who had made the fire.

"Here am I with my sister's son, Sinfjotli," cried Sigmund, "and we intend thee to know that not all the Volsungs are dead!"

He bade his sister come out and receive of him great honor and esteem, for he wished to make good to her her many woes. She answered,

"Now thou shalt know whether I cherished against King Siggeir the memory of the slaying of Volsung the King: I let kill our children who seemed to me over-slow in the avenging of their father; and I came out to thee in the guise of a witch-woman, and now Sinfjotli is the son of us two. He is so mighty a hero

because he is the child of both the son and the daughter of King Volsung. I have wrought at all times for the slaying of King Siggeir; and so mightily have I worked to bring about this revenge that on no terms will I live on hereafter; gladly shall I die now with King Siggeir, though against my will I married him." Then she kissed Sigmund her brother and Sinfjotli and bade them farewell; and she went into the fire and thereafter died there with Siggeir and all his men.

Then the kinsmen gathered ships and men, and Sigmund held his course to his heritage and cast out of the country the king who had taken it after King Volsung.

Sigmund now grew to be a rich king, wise and daring and far-famed. He took a wife who was called Borghild, and they had two sons, one called Helgi and the other Hamund; but when Helgi was born the Norns came and prophesied, and said that he would be most famous of all kings. Sigmund was at that time returned from war, and he went to see his son bearing a leek, and therewith he gave him the name Helgi, and likewise these gifts with the naming: Hringstead and Solfell and a sword; and he bade him grow great and be one of the Volsung race. He became in his time a noble and well-loved prince, ex-

ceeding most other men in all accomplishments. It is said that he went a-harrying when he was fifteen winters old. Helgi was chief over the men-at-arms, but Sinfjotli was charged therewith also, and both of them ruled over a band of warriors.

CHAPTER IX

IT is said in his wars that Helgi met with a king called Hunding; he was a rich king with many followers, ruler over many lands. It came to battle between them, and Helgi pressed hard on him, and so ended that combat that the victory was Helgi's, but King Hunding fell with a large part of his men. Helgi thought that he was now truly grown great, since he had slain so mighty a king. But Hunding's sons soon gathered an army against Helgi, for they wished to avenge their father's slaying; very fierce was the battle they had, and Helgi charged through the brothers' host, and he made an attack on the banners of the sons of King Hunding, and there he slew the four of them, Alf and Eyjolf, Hervard and Hagbard, and he won a far-famed victory.

And as Helgi was leaving the battle he met by a woodside many women of noble aspect, but one of

them far excelled all the others. They were riding in splendid attire. Helgi asked their leader her name; she said she was called Sigrun, daughter of King Hogni. Helgi said,

"Come home with us and be welcome there!" The King's daughter said,

"We have other work before us than to drink with thee." Helgi answered,

"What is that work, King's daughter?" She answered,

"King Hogni has promised me to Hoddbrod, son of King Gunnar, but I have sworn that I will no sooner have him than a raven; and yet it will come to pass unless thou ban him and do battle against him with thy host and take me away with thee, for with no king would I rather abide than with thee."

"Be merry, King's daughter," said he; "we shall surely make trial of our valor, before thou art wedded to him; and we shall first make trial which may surpass the other, and here shall my life be staked on it."

After that Helgi sent men with gifts to summon forth his folk, and they were called out to Raudabjarg. There Helgi waited until a great fleet came to him out of Heidensey, and a great army joined him from Norvasund, with large fair ships. King Helgi

called to him his steersman, who was called Leif, and asked him if he had numbered their host; but he answered,

"It is not easy to count them, prince! The ships that are come out of Norvasund are counted at twelve thousand men, yet the second part is greater still by half." Then King Helgi bade them sail into the fjord called Varinsfirth; and so they did.

Now a great storm came upon them, and so heavy a sea that when the waves roared on the ships' sides it was as if great boulders were smitten together. Helgi bade them be not afraid, nor yet to reef the sails, but to hoist them higher than before; but they were within short space of being quite overcome before they reached land. Then Sigrun, daughter of King Hogni, came from the land above and guided them into a good haven at Gnipalund. The men of the country perceived these things; and the brother of King Hoddbrod, who ruled over Svarinshaug, came down and called out to them and asked who led that great host. Sinfjotli rose up; he was clad in a helmet polished as glass, and a byrnie white as snow, with a spear in his hand bearing a splendid banner, and a gold-striped shield upon him. He knew how to parley with kings. Said he,

"Tell thy wife, after thou hast fed thy dogs and

swine, that the Volsungs are come hither, and in the host is King Helgi, if Hoddbrod will but come out and meet him; and it is his delight to go boldly to battle, whilst thou art kissing maidservants by the fire." Gudmund answered,

"Little good canst thou speak, and little of ancient things, thou who dost lie about princes; truer it is that thou hast long since been feeding thyself out in the forest with wolves' meat, and thou hast killed thy brothers too; and wonderful it is that thou hast dared to go forth in an army with good men, thou who hast sucked the blood of many a cold corpse." Sinfjotli answered,

"Thou canst no longer clearly remember the time when thou wast a witch on Varinsey and saidst thou didst desire thee a mate, and didst choose me for that office, to be thy husband; and later thou wast a valkyrie in Asgard, and it nearly came to pass that all men had to fight for thy sake; but I begat on thee nine wolves in Laganess, and I was the father of all of them." Gudmund answered,

"Mightily canst thou lie; methinks thou canst be no creature's father, since thou wert gelded by the giant's daughters on Thorsness; but thou art the stepson of King Siggeir, and didst lie out in the forest with wolves; and at once all misfortunes did befall

thee in turn: thou didst slay thy brothers and make thee known for all ill deeds." Sinfjotli answered,

"Dost thou not recall how thou wast a mare beside the steed Grani, and I did ride thee full speed on Bravell? And later thou wert goat-herd for Golnir the giant." Gudmund said,

"Rather would I feed the bird full on thy flesh than bandy words longer with thee." Then said King Helgi,

"It would be better and wiser done to fight than to speak such things as are a shame to hear; the sons of Granmar are no friends of mine, and yet they are hardy men."

Gudmund and Granmar now rode away to find King Hoddbrod at the place called Solfell; their horses were named Sveipud and Sveggjud. They met him by the gate to his fastness and gave him tidings of the war. King Hoddbrod was clad in his byrnie and he wore a helmet on his head. He asked who the strangers were: "and why are ye so angry?" Gudmund said,

"Hither are come the Volsungs to our land, and twelve thousand men with them; and there are seven thousand by the island called Sok; but by Grind there is the greatest host of all. I think that it is Helgi's will to fight us now." The King said,

"Let us send a summons throughout all our realm and go to the encounter: let none sit at home who would fight! Let us send word to the sons of Hring, and to King Hogni, and to Alf the Old, who are great warriors."

The armies met at the stead called Frekastein, and mighty was the combat between them. Helgi led the charge through the host, and there was much slaughter of men. Then they saw a great band of shield-maidens, bright as fire; and with them was Sigrun, the King's daughter. Helgi attacked King Hoddbrod and slew him under his own standard. Then Sigrun spoke,

"Thanks to thee for that stout deed! These lands must now be changed. This is a day of highest joy for me, and great honor and fame shalt thou have from the slaying of so mighty a king."

King Helgi took that realm and dwelt there a long time; he wedded Sigrun, and became in his time a noble and mighty king: but hereafter he appears no more in this saga.

CHAPTER X

NOW the Volsungs went home, and once more their fame was greatly increased. Sinfjotli departed anew to go a-harrying. He saw one time a

very fair woman, and desired very much to have her; but a brother of Borghild, Sigmund's wife, wooed her also. They did battle over this affair, and Sinfjotli slew that king; thereafter he harried far and wide, and fought many battles, and always the victory was his: thus he grew to be most famed and glorious of men, and he returned home in the fall with many ships and great wealth.

He told his father what had befallen, and Sigmund told the Queen. She bade Sinfjotli depart straightway from the realm, and she declared that she never wished to see him again. Sigmund said he would not have him depart, and he offered to make good her wrong with much gold and goods, though he had never before offered amends for any man: he said it was of no avail to quarrel with women. She could not bring her wish to pass, but said, "Thou shalt decide, lord, what is fitting."

Then she made ready a funeral feast for her brother with the King's consent; it was prepared with the best of means, and many great folk were invited thither. Borghild carried drink about to the men; she came before Sinfjotli with a great horn and said,

"Drink, stepson!" He took the horn and looked into it, and said,

"The drink is bespelled." Sigmund said,

"Give it to me!" He drank it down, but the Queen asked,

"Why should other men drink of thine ale before thee?" She came a second time with the horn: "Drink now!" said she, and goaded him with many words. He took the horn and said,

"The drink is full of deceit." Sigmund said,

"Give it to me!" The third time she came and bade him drink if he had the Volsungs' courage. Sinfjotli took the horn and said,

"There is poison in the drink." Sigmund answered,

"Quaff through thy beard then, son!" But the King was very drunk by then, and therefore he spoke so. Sinfjotli drank, and straightway fell dead. Sigmund rose up, and his woe was near to bringing him his death. He took the body in his arms and carried it out into the wood until he came at last to a firth-side. There he saw a man in a little boat. The man asked him if he wished to be ferried by him across the water, and he said yes. The boat was so small that it might not bear all of them, and the body was taken first, but Sigmund went along the edge of the firth. And soon after the boat disappeared, and likewise the man in it; and after that Sigmund went home. He sent his Queen away from him, and soon

afterwards she died. But Sigmund still ruled his kingdom, and he was thought the greatest warrior and king in olden times.

CHAPTER XI

EYLIMI was the name of a rich and far-famed king; his daughter was called Hjordis, and she was the fairest and wisest of all women. King Sigmund heard that she, or none other, was befitting to him as wife. He went and visited King Eylimi, who made ready a great feast for him if he did not come in the way of warfare; but messages were sent between them and it was made known that their meeting was friendly, not hostile; and after that the feast was prepared with the best of cheer and many guests. Everywhere a market was set forth for King Sigmund, and a fresh carriage. At the feast the two kings were lodged in the same hall. There was also come King Lyngvi, son of Hunding, who likewise sought to wed King Eylimi's daughter. The King thought it unlikely that both of them could gain their errand, and it seemed also that war might well be expected from him who did not succeed. King Eylimi spoke to his daughter,

"Thou art a wise woman, and I have said that thou shalt choose thine own husband; choose now between the two kings, and my council shall be as thine." She answered,

"This matter is difficult to decide; but I choose the king who is more famed, and that is King Sigmund, though he is far advanced in years"; and so she was given to him and Lyngvi went away. Thus Sigmund was married and took Hjordis as wife, and every following day there was greater and richer entertainment than the day before. After that King Sigmund went home to Hunland, and King Eylimi his father-in-law with him, and Sigmund again took heed of his realm.

But King Lyngvi and his brothers gathered together an army and set out against King Sigmund, for they ever had the worse of such affairs. Though the matter were now decided against them, they wished to destroy the pride of the Volsungs. They came into Hunland and sent word to King Sigmund: they had no wish to steal upon him, and they were sure that he would not flee from them. Sigmund said they would come to battle; he gathered together an army, but Hjordis was sent out into the woods with a maid-servant, and much wealth along with them, and she remained there while they fought.

The vikings leaped ashore from their ships with an unnumbered host. King Sigmund and Eylimi set up their banners and let blow their trumpets. Sigmund called for the horn that his father had had, and he egged on his men, but his was much the lesser strength. A fierce battle was fought there, and although Sigmund was old his fighting was keen, and he was ever the foremost of his men; no shield and no byrnie could resist him, and without pause he charged against the ranks of his foe that day. None might see how it fared between them. Many a spear was in the air, and many an arrow, but so did his spae-wives help him that he got no wound, and none could tell the tale of those who fell before him. Both of his arms were bloody to the shoulders.

When the battle had endured for a time, there came a man into the midst of it clad in a wide hat and a blue cape; he had but one eye, and in his hand he bore a spear. This man came towards Sigmund and lifted up the spear before him. And as Sigmund still hewed fiercely with his sword, it smote against the spear and so burst asunder in two parts. After that the slaughter changed over to his side, and the fortune of King Sigmund departed, and many of his men fell before him. The King spared himself no whit, but urged on his band. But as it is said, "nought

can avail against numbers," so King Sigmund fell in this battle together with King Eylimi his father-in-law in the front ranks of his people, and therewith the greater part of his men.

CHAPTER XII

KING LYNGVI now sought the King's dwelling; he intended to take away the Queen, but therein he was crossed, for he found neither woman nor wealth. Then he journeyed about the land and allotted the realm to his men. He thought he had slain all the Volsung race, and it seemed to him that there was no need to fear anything further from them.

But that night, after the battle, Hjordis went out into the field of the slain until she found where Sigmund lay, and she asked him if he might be healed; but he answered,

"Many a man lives again when there is little hope of it; but my good fortune has left me, so that I will not have myself healed: it is not Odin's will that I draw sword again, since this one is broken. I have had my battles so long as it pleased him." She said,

"One thing seems to me to be most needed, that

thou shouldst be healed and avenge my father." The King said,

"That is destined for another: thou goest now with child; rear him up carefully and well, and the boy will grow to be the greatest and most famed of our race. Preserve also the shattered sword, from which a goodly one may be made anew, and it shall be called Gram, and our son shall bear it and achieve therewith great deeds, which shall never grow old, for his name shall live on while the world endures. Be thou content with that. But I am grown weary with my wounds, and I must now go seek our kinsmen who have gone before."

Hjordis sat over him until he died, and the light of day was come. She saw that many ships had come to the land, and she said to her maid,

"We two shall change clothes, and thou shalt have my name and be called the King's daughter"; and so they did.

The vikings beheld the great slaughter of men, and they likewise saw the two women going into the wood; they were aware that here must be tidings of great moment, and they leaped ashore from their ships. The leader of this band was Alf, son of King Hjalprek of Denmark; he had sailed along the land with his army, and they were now come to the battle-

field, where they saw the great number of slain men. The King bade them search for the women, and they did so. He asked them who they were, but that did not turn out as might be expected: the maid gave reply for both of them and told of the fall of the kings, Sigmund and Eylimi, and many another valiant man, and likewise who had done this deed. The King asked if they knew where the royal treasure was buried, and the maid answered, "It is to be expected indeed that we should know"; and she showed it to them. There they found great wealth, so that they thought they had never before seen so much gathered together in one place; and this they bore to King Alf's ships. Hjordis followed him, and so did the maid.

He departed for his realm now; but he said that the kings who had fallen there were surely most famous of men. On the ship the King sat by the stern, but the two women were amidships; he spoke with them and gave due heed to what they said. He came home to his kingdom with great spoils, for Alf was most doughty of men. And when they had been home a short time, the Queen asked her son,

"Why has the fair dame fewer rings and meaner raiment? It seems to me that she whom thou hast valued less must be the nobler." He answered,

"I have suspected likewise that hers is not the na-

ture of a bondwoman, for when we first met, she knew how to give greeting to noble men. We shall make test of them here." And one time at feast the King began to speak with them, and he said,

"How do ye mark the passing of night into day, when the dawn is near, if ye cannot see the moon or the stars?" The maid answered,

"This is how we mark it: in my youth I was accustomed always to have a mighty drink at dawn; and since I have left off the drink, I still awake at that time, and this is my sign." The King smiled thereat and said,

"Ill wont was that for a king's daughter." Then he sought Hjordis and asked her the same, and she replied,

"My father gave me a small gold ring of such a nature that it grows chill on my finger towards dawn, and that is my sign." The King answered,

"There was gold aplenty there if the maid-servants wore it; and thou hast been concealing this from me long enough! I should have treated thee as if we were both the children of a king, if thou hadst told me; but I shall deal with thee even better now, for thou shalt be my wife, and I shall give thee dowry, when thy child is born."

She answered him and told him all the truth about

her lot; and now she abode there in the greatest honor, and to all she seemed the noblest of women.

CHAPTER XIII

NOW it is told that Hjordis gave birth to a boy, and the child was brought before King Hjalprek. The King rejoiced when he saw the bright eyes of the child, and he said that none would ever be his peer or like. He was sprinkled with water and given the name Sigurd; and all folk say alike, that there was none his equal in growth or in deeds. He was reared there by King Hjalprek with great love; and when all the noblest heroes and kings are named in the ancient sagas, Sigurd is ever in the lead because of the strength and skill, boldness and zeal which he possessed over and above every other man in the northern part of the world. Sigurd grew up with King Hjalprek, and all little children loved him. The King gave Hjordis to Alf as wife and dowry was allotted for her.

Regin, son of Hreidmar, was foster-father of Sigurd: he taught him all sorts of accomplishments, chess and runes and many tongues of men, as is the wont with kings' sons, and many other things besides. One time when the two of them were together Regin

asked Sigurd if he knew how much wealth his father had had, and who were guardians over it. Sigurd replied and said that the kings were guardians of it. Regin said,

"Dost thou trust them so greatly?" Sigurd answered,

"It is befitting that they should hold it until it falls to me, for they can better watch over it than I."

Another time Regin came to speak with Sigurd and said,

"It is strange indeed that thou shouldst be the kings' stable-boy or run on their errands." Sigurd answered,

"It is not so, for I take counsel with them in everything, and all that I desire is granted me." Regin said,

"Ask the King to give thee a horse!" Sigurd replied,

"It will be at once as I will."

Sigurd now met the King and he said to him,

"What wouldst thou have of us?" Sigurd answered,

"I would have a horse for my pleasure." The King said,

"Choose thyself the horse thou wouldst have from our own."

The next day Sigurd went into the wood, and he met there an old man with a long beard, who was unknown to him, and he asked whither Sigurd went. He answered,

"I go to choose me a horse: do thou give me counsel therein." He said,

"Let us go and drive them to the river called Busiltjorn." They drove the steeds out into the deep water, and all of them swam ashore save one. This one Sigurd took; it was gray in color, young and large and fair, and no one had mounted upon it. The bearded man said,

"This steed is sprung from Sleipnir, and he shall be carefully nurtured so that he may grow to be better than any other horse," and then the man vanished. Sigurd called the horse Grani, and that was the best of steeds; Odin it was that had met him there. Again Regin said to Sigurd,

"Too little wealth dost thou have; it grieves me that thou goest about like a village churl; but I can tell thee where much gold is to be had, and it would be a deed of great honor to seek it and great glory if thou canst attain it." Sigurd asked where it was and who guarded it. Regin answered,

"There is one called Fafnir who lies not far hence on Gnitahead; and when thou goest thither thou shalt

deem that thou hast never beheld more riches in gold gathered in one place; and never wouldst thou have need of more, though thou shouldst become the oldest and most famed of kings." Sigurd answered,

"I know the nature of that dragon, though I am but young, and I have heard it said that none dares to go against him because he is so great and cruel." Regin answered,

"It is not so; his size is in accord with the nature of ling-worms, and it is reported to be much greater than it is; and so it would have appeared to thine ancestors. Though thou be of the Volsung race thou canst not have the spirit of those who are reported to have been foremost of men." Sigurd replied,

"It may be that I have not much of their boldness or skill, but there is no need to taunt me, who am yet but little beyond childhood. Why dost thou urge this so strongly?" Regin answered,

"There is a tale to it, and I would tell it thee." Sigurd said,

"Let me hear it!"

CHAPTER XIV

"THIS is the beginning of the tale, that my father was named Hreidmar, a great man and a wealthy; one son of his was called Fafnir, and

another Otr, and I was the third. I was the least favored and least accomplished, but I could work with iron, and I wrought useful things of gold and silver and other stuff. My brother Otr was of another nature: his craft was to hunt, and in this he excelled other men. By day he went in the likeness of an otter, and he abode ever in the water, where he caught up fish in his mouth. He brought his booty home to our father, and that was a great help to him. The likeness of an otter was often upon him; he would come home late and eat alone, with his eyes shut, for he could not see on dry land. Fafnir was by far the greatest and grimmest of us three, and he wished always to claim all things as his own.

"There was a dwarf called Andvari," said Regin, "who dwelt ever in the waterfall named Andvari's Fall, in the semblance of a pike, and he fetched his food thence, since there was a great store of fish in that torrent. My brother Otr also went to that fall and caught fish in his mouth and afterwards he laid them one by one on the shore.

"One time Odin, Loki, and Hoenir went their ways and passed by Andvari's Fall; at that time Otr had caught a salmon and ate it blinking on the river's shore. Loki took up a stone and struck him therewith to death. The Æsir were well content with their booty

and flayed off the skin from the otter. That evening they came to Hreidmar's house and showed him their trophy; but we seized them at once, and imposed upon them this ransom, to yield in requital for their lives, that they should fill the skin quite full of gold, and likewise cover it over on the outside with gold. They sent Loki to gain them the gold. He went to Ran and borrowed her net, and then he sought Andvari's Fall and cast it in before the pike, which leaped into the net. Then said Loki:

'What is this fish that runs in the flood,
Now helpless and forfeit to me?
Wouldst thou have thy head and hold it redeemed,
Fetch me flaming gold as thy fee!'

He said:

'Andvari I'm called, Odin was my sire,
By many a fall I have fared,
The Norn decreed I should dwell in the flood—
From her doom I have not been spared!'

"Loki beheld all the gold that Andvari had, but when he had delivered it over, there still remained by him a ring, and Loki took this from him also. The dwarf went into a hollow rock, and he declared that every man who owned that ring would get his bane of it, and likewise from the gold. The Æsir gave

over the treasure to Hreidmar and stuffed the otter's skin full therewith and set it up on its feet; then they were to pile up the gold beside it and so cover it without; but when that was done Hreidmar went before it and he still saw one whisker, and he bade them cover it. Then Odin took from his hand the ring that was Andvari's treasure, and he covered the hair. Then said Loki:

'The gold is now yielded; thou hast, meseems,
No small price paid for my head;
To thy son shall come small bliss of this gain
But death to you both, in its stead!'

"Afterwards Fafnir killed our father," said Regin, "by murder, but I gained none of the treasure. His nature was so ill that he betook himself into the wilderness and granted no one the enjoyment of the gold save himself, and he became at last an evil dragon, and he lies now on that treasure. After that I went to the King and became his smith; and this is the tale of how I missed all share in my father's heritage and my brother's wergild. But that gold has ever since been called Otr's Ransom, and examples are taken therefrom." Sigurd answered,

"Much hast thou lost, and evil indeed were thy kinsmen. Do thou make me a sword, by thy cunning,

so that none shall be its like, and so that I may do great deeds therewith, if my spirit avail thereto; do this if thou desirest that I slay that great dragon." Regin said,

"Boldly shall I do that, and thou shalt be able to kill Fafnir with that sword."

CHAPTER XV

REGIN now wrought a sword and gave it to Sigurd. He took it and said, "Such is thy smithying, Regin!" and smote on the anvil with it, and so the sword was shattered. He cast aside the blade, and bade him smithy a second one better than that. Regin made another sword for Sigurd and brought it to him. He looked at it. Regin said,

"This one must please thee, though it is a hard thing to be thy smith."

Sigurd tested this sword, and he broke it even as the first. Then he said to Regin,

"Thou must be treacherous as thy former kinsmen!" After that he went to his mother; she received him well, and they spoke together and drank. Then Sigurd said,

"Is it true, as I have heard, that King Sigmund

gave the sword Gram over to thee in two parts?" She answered, "It is true." Sigurd said,

"Give them to me; I would have them!" She said he was likely to win glory with that sword, and gave it over to him.

Sigurd now went to Regin and bade him make a brand of the pieces. Regin was angered; he went to the smithy with the fragments, thinking that Sigurd was over-eager about the task. Now Regin made a sword; and when he bore it from the hearth of the forge it seemed to the apprentices as if its edge were aflame. He bade Sigurd take it, and he said that he was no maker of swords if this one broke. Sigurd struck on the anvil and clove it down to the base, and yet the blade neither broke nor cracked. He praised the sword highly. He went to a stream with a tuft of wool: this he cast against the current, and it was cut in two when he held his sword against it. Sigurd went home rejoicing. Regin said,

"Thou must now make good thy promise and go meet Fafnir, since I have made the sword." Sigurd answered,

"I shall keep my word, but not before my father is avenged."

Sigurd was endeared to all folk, as he grew older, and all children loved him.

CHAPTER XVI

GRIPIR was the name of a man who was Sigurd's mother's brother. After the sword had been made, Sigurd went to see Gripir, because he had knowledge of the future and knew beforehand the fate of men. Sigurd asked him what would be the course of his life. Gripir was long unwilling to reply, but when Sigurd pressed hard upon him with his prayer he told him all that lay before him, even as it later came to pass. And when Gripir had told all these things, Sigurd rode home. And soon after he and Regin met again. Regin said,

"Slay Fafnir, as thou didst promise!" Sigurd replied,

"I shall do it indeed, but not before I have avenged King Sigmund and my other kinsmen who fell of yore in battle."

CHAPTER XVII

NOW Sigurd sought the two kings and said,

"For some time have I been here, and my debt to you is great for your love and the great honor

done me; but now I desire to leave this land and seek the sons of Hunding. I wish them to know that the Volsungs are not all dead. For this I crave help of you." The kings said they would give him all he asked. So a great host was assembled, and all things carefully prepared, both ships and arms, so that his journey might be more splendid than any before. Sigurd steered the ship which was greatest and noblest; the sails of all of them were wrought with great skill, and splendid to see.

Now they sailed with a favoring wind, and when a few days were passed there came a great storm, and the sea was as if reddened with blood. Sigurd bade them not to reef the sails, though they were rent, but rather to raise them higher than before.

And as they sailed by a mountain headland, a man called from it to the ship, and asked who was the leader of that host. They told him that their chief was Sigurd, Sigmund's son, the most renowned of young men living. The man answered,

"It is said by all alike that no king's son may be compared with him. I wish that ye would lower the sails on one of the ships and take me aboard." They asked his name. He said:

"Hnikar my name when I gladdened Huginn;
I am Fjolnir or Feng on this cliff;

A passage I ask, O Volsung lad—
To be ferried across in thy skiff."

They turned ashore and took the man on board. Then the storm abated, and they fared on until they came to land in the kingdom of Hunding's sons; there Fjolnir disappeared. Here they poured out fire and steel; they slew men and burnt their dwellings and laid waste the land as they went on. The foe fled before them to King Lyngvi and told him that an army had come into the land and was wreaking greater destruction than had ever been known before. They said that the sons of Hunding were in no way farsighted when they had deemed the Volsungs no longer to be feared, "for it is Sigurd, Sigmund's son that leads this army now," quoth they.

King Lyngvi now sent out the summons to war throughout all his realm; he would not take to flight, but called thither all the men who would serve him. He and his brothers charged upon Sigurd with a great army, and there was a very fierce battle between them. Many an arrow could be seen flying and many a spear; there were axes blood-reddened and shields cloven and byrnies slit; there were shattered shields and riven skulls, and many a man fallen to the earth. And when the battle had so endured for a long time, Sigurd advanced to the standard, bear-

ing in his hands the sword Gram. He hewed down both horses and men, and charged through the ranks, with his arms bloody to the shoulders; folk fled away wherever he came. Neither helm nor byrnie withstood him, and all men thought that they had never seen his like before. This battle lasted a long time, with fierce fighting and great slaughter of men; and even as it happens that a lord's leadership is seldom lost, so it was here: many a man fell before the sons of Hunding, so that none could tell the number of them. And Sigurd was in the front ranks among his men. The sons of King Hunding attacked him; Sigurd smote at King Lyngvi and clove his helmet and head and his armored body, and afterwards he hewed asunder his brother Hjorvard, and he slew all the sons of Hunding who still lived, and the greater part of their host.

Now Sigurd went home, having won a fair victory and renown, and he had with him great booty which he had taken in this war. Great feasts were held in his honor throughout the kingdom. And when Sigurd had been home a short time, Regin came to speak with him and said,

"Now thou wilt be wishing to smite off Fafnir's helm from him, as thou didst promise, for thou hast

now avenged thy father and thine other kinsmen." Sigurd said,

"It is my intent to fulfill what I promised in this matter, nor has it slipped from my memory."

CHAPTER XVIII

NOW Sigurd and Regin rode up on the heath to the track by which Fafnir was wont to creep when he went down to the water; and it is said that the crag on which he lay when he drank measured thirty fathoms. Then said Sigurd,

"Thou saidst, Regin, that this dragon was no greater than a ling-worm, but to me his tracks seem exceeding great." Regin said,

"Make thyself a pit and set thyself therein, and when the dragon crawls to the water thou shalt strike at his heart and thus give him his bane. Thou shalt win great fame therefor." Sigurd said,

"What help will there be, if the dragon's blood impedes me?" Regin answered,

"None will give thee counsel if thou art afeared of aught; thou hast not thy kinsmen's courage!"

Now Sigurd rode on to the heath, but Regin hastened away, very much afraid. Sigurd made a pit, and while he was working at it, there came to him an old man with a long beard and asked him what he was doing there. He told him; and then that ancient man replied,

"That is ill-advised; make more than one pit, and let the blood run down into them, but do thou sit in one and strike at the heart of the dragon!" Then the man disappeared, but Sigurd wrought the pits as he had been told.

And when the dragon came creeping to the water, the earth quaked so mightily that all the land nearby quivered; it blew forth poison the whole way before it, but Sigurd had no fear or terror of that din. When the dragon crawled over the pit, Sigurd plunged the sword in under the left shoulder, as deep as the hilt. Then he leaped out of the ditch and snatched back the sword again; and both his arms were bloody to the shoulders. And when the great worm felt itself wounded to death, it struck about with head and tail so that all things before it burst asunder.

When Fafnir had received his death-wound he asked,

"Who art thou? Who is thy father and what thy

race, thou who wast bold enough to raise weapon against me?" Sigurd answered,

"My race is unknown to men; I am called the Noble Beast, and I have no father or mother, but I have journeyed alone." Fafnir answered,

"If thou hast no father or mother, by what wonder wast thou born? And though thou wilt not tell me thy name on my dying day, thou knowest that thou art lying to me." He answered,

"I am called Sigurd, and my father was Sigmund." Fafnir said,

"Who egged thee on to this deed, and why didst thou let thyself be urged? Hadst thou not heard how all folk fear me and my helm of terror? Bright-eyed boy, thou hadst a bold sire!" Sigurd replied,

"My bold spirit whetted me on to this; and my strong hand and sharp sword, which thou now knowest, helped me to the doing of this deed; for few are bold in age that are timid in youth." Fafnir said,

"I know that if thou hadst grown up amongst thy kinsmen thou couldst have been one to do battle in anger; but it is a greater wonder that a captive prisoner should have dared to fight against me, for seldom are slaves bold to do battle." Sigurd said,

"Dost thou reproach me because I am far from my kinsmen? And even though I was taken in war,

yet I was not fettered; and thou at least hast felt that I was free." Fafnir answered,

"Thou takest that which I say as hateful speech: but I tell thee this gold which once was mine shall be thy bane." Sigurd replied,

"Each man would keep his riches until the final day, and all must die at some time." Fafnir said,

"Little wilt thou do according to my teaching: but thou shalt drown if thou goest by sea unwarily; wait rather until it is calm." Sigurd said,

"Tell me this, Fafnir, if thou art so very wise, who are the Norns who chose the sons from their mothers?" Fafnir answered,

"They are many and of different sorts: some of the race of Æsir, some of the race of elves, and some are the daughters of Dvalin." Sigurd said,

"What is the name of that isle, where Surt and the Æsir mix blood together?" Fafnir answered,

"It is called Oskapt." And again Fafnir said, "My brother Regin has wrought my death; and it gladdens me that he is working thy death also, for it will go even as he willed." And once again Fafnir spoke, "For all folk I have worn a helm of terror since I lay on my brother's heritage, and I spewed forth poison everywhere before me, so that none

dared approach me, and I feared no weapon; and never did I meet with a man so strong that I did not think myself the stronger; and all were afraid of me." Sigurd said,

"That helm of terror thou speakest of gives victory to few, for every man that meets with many others must one time learn that none is alone the keenest of all." Fafnir answered,

"I counsel thee to take thy horse and ride away as swiftly as may be, for it often happens that he who receives a death-wound avenges himself for it." Sigurd said,

"Such is thy counsel, but I shall do otherwise, for I shall ride to thy lair and take thence the great store of gold that thy kinsmen once had." Fafnir answered,

"Thou shalt ride then until thou findest so much gold that it will last for all of thy days; but that same gold shall be thy bane and every other man's bane who owns it." Sigurd arose and said,

"I would ride home and lose this great treasure, if I knew that then I should never die; but every bold man would be master of riches until the last day. Do thou, Fafnir, lie here in thy death-struggles till Hel have thee!" And therewith Fafnir died.

CHAPTER XIX

AFTER that Regin came to Sigurd and said, "Hail, my lord! Thou has won thee a great victory in the slaying of Fafnir, for no man before was bold enough to abide in his path, and the fame of this deed will live on while the world remains."

Now Regin stood still and gazed at the earth a long time, and after that he spoke with great wrath,

"Thou hast slain my brother, and I can scarcely be held free of that deed."

Sigurd took his sword Gram and dried it on the grass. He said to Regin,

"Thou didst go far away while I wrought this deed, and tested this sharp sword with my hands; and I fought by my strength against the might of the drake whilst thou wert lurking in the heather; and in thy fright thou knewest not which was heaven and which earth." Regin answered,

"This dragon might have lain long in his lair hadst thou not had aid of this sword, which I made thee with my hands: neither thou nor any other man could have done this alone." Sigurd said,

"When men come to combat, a stout heart is bet-

ter than a sharp sword." Then Regin spoke to Sigurd in somber mood,

"Thou didst slay my brother, and I scarcely may be held free of the deed." Then Regin cut out the heart of the snake with a sword that was named Ridil. He drank the blood of Fafnir and said,

"Grant me a prayer that will cost thee little: take the heart to the fire and roast it, and give it me to eat!" Sigurd went and roasted it on a spit, and when it frothed over, he tested it with his finger to know if it were done; his finger was scorched, and he thrust it into his mouth; when the blood of the dragon came upon his tongue, he understood the speech of birds. He heard some nuthatches chattering in the brushwood beside him, and they said,

"There sits Sigurd roasting the heart of Fafnir; rather should he eat it himself, for then he would become wiser than all other men." Another said,

"There lies Regin, who would deceive him who trusts in him." And the third said,

"Let him but smite off his head, and he alone will be lord of all the treasure!" The fourth spoke,

"Wiser he would be if he did as ye have counselled him to, and if he rode after that to Fafnir's lair and took all the gold that is in it; and next he should ride up on Hindarfell where Brynhild sleeps;

there he may learn great lore. He would be wise if he followed your counsel and took thought for his need: a wolf is to be found where a wolf's ears are." Said the fifth,

"He is not so wise as I thought if he spares the man whose brother he has slain." Then the sixth one spoke,

"It were well-advised if he would slay him and take the treasure for himself alone." Then said Sigurd,

"The evil fates do not intend that Regin shall be my bane; rather shall both brothers go the same way!" And he drew his sword and struck off Regin's head.

After that he ate some part of the dragon's heart, but some of it he kept. Next he mounted his horse and rode along Fafnir's trail as far as his dwelling, and found that it was open. The doors were of iron, and likewise their fastenings, and all the posts of the house, and it was dug into the ground. There Sigurd found a great store of gold and also the sword Hrotti. He took out the helm of terror and the golden byrnie and many treasures. He found so much gold there that it seemed to him two or three horses might scarce bear it. He took all of it and bore it out to

Grani in two great chests; then he took Grani by the reins, but the steed would not move, and it was of no avail to whip him. Sigurd perceived what the horse desired; he leaped upon its back and pricked him with his spurs, and the horse galloped forward as if he were unloaded.

CHAPTER XX

SIGURD now rode forward a long way until he came up on Hindarfell, and he took his way southwards towards Frankland. Upon a cliff he saw a great brightness before him, as if fire burnt there, and it flared up to the very heavens. When he came near to it there stood before him a rampart of shields and a banner above them. Sigurd went into the fastness of shields and saw a man lying there asleep in full armor; first he took off the helmet from his head, and then he saw that it was a woman. She was clad in a byrnie, which was as close as if it had grown together with the flesh. This he slashed asunder from the neck down, and out across both sleeves, and his blade cut as if it were cloth. He told her that she had slept far too long. She asked what mighty thing it was that bit her byrnie and roused her from sleep—

"or is this Sigurd, Sigmund's son, who is come, wearing Fafnir's helm, and carrying Fafnir's bane in his hands?" Then Sigurd answered,

"It is one of the Volsung race that has done this deed. I have heard that thou art a rich king's daughter; and I have likewise heard of thy beauty and wisdom, which I would now make trial of."

Brynhild told him that two kings once battled, of whom one was called Hjalmgunnar, an old man but a great warrior, and Odin had promised him the victory; but the other was Agnar, Audi's brother. "I struck down Hjalmgunnar in the combat, but Odin stabbed me with a thorn of sleep in punishment therefor and said that I would never again have victory but I should have to be wedded; but I in my turn swore an oath that I would marry no man who knew fear." Sigurd said,

"Teach me the lore of great counsels!" She answered,

"That thou shouldst better be able to do than I; but with my thanks will I teach thee, if there is aught I know that may please thee, either of runes or other things which pertain to men's fates. But let us now drink together and may the gods grant us a fair day, so that thou mayest gain use and fame from my wisdom; and may thou remember later what we two

have said." Brynhild filled a goblet and brought it to Sigurd, and said:

"Beer do I bring thee, thou leader of battle,
Mixed with spells of renown and praise;
It is brewed with charms and with joyous runes,
With favoring speech, and with lays.

"Runes thou shalt know, and cut on thy sword
If thou wouldst have victory,
On its hilt and its edge let them be, and twice
Call on Tyr to favor thee.

"Surf-runes shalt thou know and cut on thy ship
When out on the sea thou shalt sail;
On rudder and stem and on oar they shall be,
That breakers may spare thee and waves may not harm thee,
And safe thou shalt leave them, and hale.

"Speech-runes shalt thou know, if thou wouldst be free
Of feudsman's harm and sting;
Wind them and weave them and gather them well
When all men fare to the Thing.

"Ale-runes thou shalt know if thou'dst save thee from guile
Of woman whose faith may fail;
On thy horn thou shalt have them and on thy hand,
And an N shall be marked on thy nail;

"On thy goblet devise them to fend off harm,
And a leek thou shalt cast in the cup;
This frees me from fear that poison may be
In the mead that thou takest to sup.

"Travail-runes thou shouldst know for laboring wife;
To lighten her these thou shalt say;
Both thy palm and thy joints shall be spanned with their craft,
And for goddesses' help thou shalt pray.

"Branch-runes thou shalt know if thou wouldst be leech
And master of healing lore;
On bark thou shalt cut them, and wood of the fir
Whose branches turn east evermore.

"Wouldst thou wiser be than other men,
The runes of thought thou shalt find:
Hroptr has cut them and eke he has read them,
And stored them deep in his mind.

"On Alsvin's hoof and Arvak's ear
And the shield of the shining god be they,
On the wheel of the chariot of Hrungni's Bane,
On Sleipnir's teeth, and straps of the sleigh.

"On the eagle's beak and bloody wings,
On Bragi's tongue and Bruin's paw,
On loosened palms and pity's way,
On bridge's end and on wolf's claw;

"On glass and gold and silver good,
In wine and weed and witch's seat,
On Gungnir's point and giant's breast,
On the Norn's nail and night-owl's beak;

"These were cut and these were scored
And mingled with holy mead;
The elves have some, the Æsir some,
And wise men some at need.

"These are the book-runes and runes of ale
And mighty runes that for help are given;
The hale and the free have their strength at need,
May they serve thee well till the final day
When the might of the gods is riven!

"Now shalt thou choose, bold hero in battle,
Take one or the other part;
Shall it be speech or shall it be silence—
Weigh thou well in thy heart."

Sigurd said:

"I would not flee though this were my doom,
For I was never born to quake;
So long as I live I will have thy love—
This is the choice I make."

CHAPTER XXI

SIGURD said, "Never was there wiser woman in all the world, than thou; teach me more counsel!" She answered,

"Fitting it is to do according to thy will and give thee sage counsel according to thy request and desire for wisdom." And she said, "Do well by thy kinsmen and take no revenge for their misdeeds against thee; show thou endurance therein, and thou shalt gain lasting praise therewith.

"Guard thyself against evil chance, the love of a maid or of another man's wife, for ill fortune often springs from these two things. Be thou no friend of unwise men where many folk gather together: they often speak worse than they know, and so thou mayest be called coward, and it may be thought that thou art justly so deemed. Slay that man another day, and repay him thus for his hatred.

"If thou goest by a way where evil creatures dwell, be thou wary, take no shelter near the road, though the night should come, for wicked folk often live in the places where men go astray.

"Let no fair women entice thee when thou be-

holdest them at the feast, so that thy sleep is disturbed and thou sufferest heart-ache therewith; lure them not to thee with kisses or other fair semblance. If thou hearest foolish words from drunken men, quarrel not with those that are flown with wine and wanting their wits; such things cause many a man sorrow or death.

"Fight thou rather thy foe in the open than be burnt at home. Swear no false oath, for grim revenge follows the breaking of pledges. Take careful heed of dead men, whether they perished by sea or weapon or plague, and give care to their dead bodies. Trust not a man whose father or brother or other near kinsman thou hast slain, though he be of tender years, for often a wolf is hidden in the young son of the slain.

"Beware of the wily counsels of thy friends; but little can I foresee thy future life, but thou shalt not let the hatred of thy wife's kin come upon thee." Sigurd said,

"None is wiser than thou, and I swear that I shall have thee, and thou dost answer most to my desire." She answered,

"I would first take thee, though I had all men to choose from." And this they swore together with oaths.

CHAPTER XXII

NOW Sigurd rode away from Brynhild. He had a shield thus marked: it was bathed in red gold, and a dragon was painted upon it, dark brown above and bright red below, and in the same manner were marked his helmet and saddle and coat. He wore a golden byrnie and all his weapons were adorned with gold. The dragon was wrought on all his weapons so that all those who saw him and knew of the deed might know that he who passed by was the slayer of the great dragon whom the Verings call Fafnir. And his weapons were all of gold and brown because he far surpassed other men in courtesy and noble bearing and in almost all other things; and of all heroes who are reckoned as the greatest warriors and the most glorious, he must ever be named the first, and his name is upon all men's tongues north of the Grecian sea, and so it will be while the world endures.

His hair was light brown and fair to look upon, and it grew in long curls; his beard was thick and short and of the same color. His nose stood high, and his face was broad and large boned; his eyes were so keen, that few men dared look direct beneath his brows. His shoulders were as broad as two men's.

In height and in size his body was so shaped as is most comely, and it was a sign of his height that when he passed through a full-grown rye field wearing his sword Gram—which was seven spans long—the chape of its sheath grazed the top of the standing grain; and yet his strength was greater than his size.

He knew well how to wield his sword and cast his spear; to throw his shaft and hold his shield; to span his bow and ride his steed. Many sorts of courtesy did he learn in his youth. He was a wise man, and he had foresight of things to come; he understood the speech of birds, and because of these arts few things befell him unawares. He was so ready and skilled in speech that whenever he undertook to urge any matter, he did not leave off before it appeared to all men as the only possible course. It was his game and delight to give aid to his men and to test himself in daring deeds; to take riches from his foes and give them to his friends. He was not lacking in courage, and he was never afraid.

CHAPTER XXIII

SIGURD now rode on until he came to a great homestead. The lord of it was Heimir, who was wedded to Bekkhild the sister of Brynhild. She was

called so because she had remained at home and done fine hand-work; but Brynhild fared abroad in helmet and byrnie and went a-warring, and therefore she was called Brynhild. Heimir and Bekkhild had a son called Alsvid, most courteous of men.

The men were at game outside; but when they saw this man riding up to the dwelling they left off their contests to wonder at him, for they had never seen his like; and they went to meet him and made him welcome. Alsvid bade him remain there and receive of him whatever things he would, and this he accepted. He was nobly served; four men lifted the gold from his horse, and the fifth received him. There were many rare and lovely treasures to be seen there, and it was thought a great delight to gaze on the byrnies and helmets and great rings, the golden cups and weapons of many kinds.

Sigurd remained there a long time in great honor, and it was noised far and wide in the land that he was the one who slew the dragon. Great love was between them, and each held faith with the other; it was their sport to make ready their weapons, to fit shafts to their arrows, and go hunting with their hawks.

CHAPTER XXIV

NOW Brynhild was come home to Heimir, her foster-father, and she sat in a bower with her maidens. She was more skilled than other women; she adorned her tapestry with gold, and embroidered upon it the wonderful deeds that Sigurd had wrought: the slaying of the dragon, the taking of the gold, and the death of Regin.

It is told that one day Sigurd went riding in the woods with his hawks and hounds and a great number of followers, and when he came home, his hawk flew up to a high tower and settled upon a window. Sigurd went after the hawk, and there within he saw a fair woman, and he knew that it was Brynhild; he thought both things equally rare, her beauty, and that which she wrought. He returned to the hall, but would take no part in the games of the men. Then said Alsvid,

"Why art thou so silent? This manner of thine weighs on thy friends, what hinders thy gladness? Thy hawks hang their heads, and likewise thy steed Grani: it will be long before this can be amended." Sigurd answered,

"My good friend, hear what is in my mind! My hawk lately flew up on a tower, and when I fetched

it thence I saw a fair woman; she sat by a golden tapestry and embroidered there my deeds that are past and done." Alsvid answered,

"Thou hast seen Brynhild, Budli's daughter, who excels all other women." Sigurd said,

"It must be true, but how long is she here?" Alsvid replied,

"There was but a short time between thy coming and hers." Sigurd said,

"It is but a few days since I knew it; that maid seems to me the best in all the world." Alsvid said,

"Take thou no heed of a woman, such a man as thou art; it is an ill thing for a man to grumble about what he fails to attain."

"I shall seek her," said Sigurd, "and give her gold, and gain delight of her and exchange of love." Alsvid answered,

"That man has not been found to whom she would grant place beside her or give ale to drink; it is her desire to go out into battle and perform deeds of renown." Sigurd said,

"I do not know whether she will answer me or not, or grant me place beside her."

The next day Sigurd went to the bower, but Alsvid stood outside it, sharpening his arrows. Sigurd said,

"Hail to thee, lady! How dost thou fare?" She answered,

"Well do I fare, for my friends and my kinsmen live, but there is ever a doubt what fortune men shall have to their final day."

He sat down beside her. Then there came in four women bearing great goblets of gold filled with the best wine, and they stood before them. Brynhild said,

"That seat may be given to few save when my father comes." He answered,

"It is now given to one that pleases me."

The room was hung with the richest tapestries, and all the floor was covered with cloth. Sigurd said,

"Now that which thou didst promise is come to pass." She said,

"Be thou welcome here!"

Then she rose up, and the four maidens with her; she took the golden beaker to him and bade him drink. He stretched out his hand towards the goblet and took her hand with it and drew her down beside himself; he put his arms about her neck and kissed her and said,

"No woman was ever born fairer than thou!" Brynhild said,

"It is wiser counsel to put no faith in a woman's

power, for they break always what they have sworn." He said,

"That day shall be best of all when each of us may have delight of the other!" Brynhild answered,

"It is not fated that we dwell together; I am a shield-maiden and I wear my helm among princes of battle. I must give aid to them in war, and I am no whit loath to go into combat." Sigurd replied,

"It will be the greatest joy for us if we may dwell together, else the sorrow that lies therein is harder to bear than a sharp weapon." Brynhild answered,

"I must behold the hosts of warriors, and thou shalt be wed to Gudrun, Gjuki's daughter." Sigurd answered,

"No king's daughter shall beguile me; I am not false-minded and I swear by the gods that I shall have thee, or no woman else." She swore the same thing. Sigurd thanked her for the words she spoke and gave her a gold ring, and so they renewed their oaths. Then he went away to his men, and remained there for a time in great renown.

CHAPTER XXV

GJUKI was the name of a king who ruled the kingdom south of the Rhine. He had three sons, who were called Gunnar and Hogni and Gutth-

orm; Gudrun was his daughter, and she was the most renowned of maidens. They surpassed all other princes in every accomplishment, in beauty and in growth. They were often in battle and wrought many glorious deeds. Gjuki was wedded to Grimhild the Wise.

Budli was the name of a king; he was more powerful than Gjuki, and yet both of them were mighty. Atli was Brynhild's brother, a grim man, great and swarthy and yet a noble man and a very great warrior. Grimhild was a cruel woman. The might of the Gjukings flourished, and that was chiefly because of the children, who so far surpassed most others.

One day Gudrun said to her maids that she had lost all her gladness of heart. One of her women asked her what caused her sorrow, and she answered,

"I have had ill fortune in my dreams, and therefore is my heart heavy: rede thou my dream when thou hearest it." She said,

"Tell it me, and grieve not because of it, for ill weather is often the cause of dreams." Gudrun answered,

"This was no mere weather: I dreamed that I saw a fair hawk on my hand, and his feathers were of a golden hue." The woman said,

"Many a man has heard of thy beauty, thy wisdom, and thy courtly bearing; some king's son will come and woo thee." Gudrun answered,

"There was nothing in the world I cared for more than that hawk, and I would rather have lost all my wealth than him." The woman said,

"He who wins thee shall be a noble man, and thou shalt love him greatly." Gudrun replied,

"It grieves me that I know not who he is; let us go and find Brynhild; she will know."

They made them ready with gold and great adornment, and she went with her maids to Brynhild's hall; this hall was adorned with gold and stood on a mountain. When their coming was espied, the folk reported to Brynhild that many women were riding to the burg in gilded wains.

"That must be Gudrun, Gjuki's daughter," said she; "I dreamed of her last night. Let us go out and meet her. No fairer women have ever come to see us!"

They went out to meet them and gave them fair greeting. They went into the fair hall, which was painted over within, and adorned with much silver; cloths were spread beneath their feet and they were well served. There were many kinds of game and

sport for their pleasure. Gudrun was very silent, and Brynhild said,

"Why dost thou show so little joy? Do not so, but let us disport ourselves together and talk of great kings and their mighty deeds!"

"Let us do so," said Gudrun. "Who are the most excellent of the kings thou hast known?" Brynhild answered,

"The sons of Hamund, Haki and Hagbard; they wrought many deeds of great note in war." Gudrun said,

"They were mighty and renowned, but Sigar took their one sister and burnt another in her house, and yet they are slow to take revenge. But why dost thou not name my brothers, who are now thought to be the foremost of men!" Brynhild said,

"They promise well, but they are not yet greatly tried; and I know one who far surpasses them: he is Sigurd, son of King Sigmund. When he was but a boy he slew the sons of King Hunding and avenged his father and King Eylimi, his mother's father." Gudrun said,

"What great sign was there in that? Didst thou say he was already born when his father fell?" Brynhild answered,

"His mother went upon the battlefield and found King Sigmund lying wounded, and she offered to bind up his sores, but he said he was too old to fight longer. He bade her take comfort, for she would give birth to a brave son. This was the prophecy of a wise man. After King Sigmund's death she went with King Alf, and there Sigurd was reared in great honor, and he performed many great deeds each day; and he surpasses all other men in the world." Gudrun said,

"Out of love hast thou marked these tidings of him; but I came here to tell thee of dreams of mine which have caused me great care." Brynhild answered,

"Let no such thing distress thee! Abide with thy kinsmen, who wish thee every joy."

"I dreamed," said Gudrun, "that we went forth from the bower, many of us together, and we saw a great hart. It was more splendid than other deer, and its hair was of gold; all of us desired to have it, but only I might get it, and that deer seemed better to me than aught else. But later thou didst shoot down that deer before my very knees, and so great was my woe that I might scarcely bear it. After that thou gavest me a wolf's whelp, and it spattered me with the blood of my brothers." Brynhild answered,

"I shall foretell thee how it will come to pass: Si-

gurd, he whom I chose for my mate, will come to thee, and Grimhild will give him mead that is drugged, which shall bring us all into great strife. Thou shalt have him, but soon after shalt lose him; then thou shalt be wedded to King Atli and lose all thy brothers, and King Atli thou shalt slay." Gudrun replied,

"Great sorrow it is to me to know such things!"

Then they went home again to King Gjuki.

CHAPTER XXVI

NOW Sigurd rode away with the great store of gold, and the friends parted. He rode on Grani with all his war-weeds and his burden. He fared on until he came to the hall of King Gjuki; he rode into the burg, and one of the King's men saw him and said,

"I think that one of the gods is come hither! This man is all trapped out in gold, and his horse is far greater than other horses, and most beautiful are his weapons; and he himself far surpasses other men." The King went out with his retainers and greeted the man, and asked,

"Who art thou that ridest into this burg, where none may enter save by the leave of my sons?" He answered,

"I am called Sigurd, son of King Sigmund." King Gjuki said,

"Be thou welcome here with us, and receive of us all things thou wilt."

He went into the hall, and there all men seemed small beside him. They served him well, and he abode there in high favor. Sigurd and Gunnar and Hogni rode abroad together, but Sigurd surpassed them in every feat, though they were all mighty men.

Grimhild found out how much Sigurd loved Brynhild, and how often he spoke of her. She thought it would be a better fortune for them if he were settled there and wedded to King Gjuki's daughter. She saw that none might be matched with him, and what strength there was in him, and she knew that he had a great store of wealth, much more than men had ever heard of before. The King dealt with him as with his sons, and they honored him more than themselves.

One evening as they sat and drank, the Queen arose and went before Sigurd; she spoke to him and said,

"We are fain of thy dwelling here, Sigurd, and all good things we wish in thy behalf. Take thou this horn and drink!" He took it and drank. She said, "King Gjuki shall be thy father and I thy mother;

thy brothers shall be Gunnar and Hogni and all ye who swear the oath, and the like of you shall not be found."

Sigurd was well pleased with this; and by reason of that drink he could no longer remember Brynhild. He dwelt there for some time.

One day Grimhild went to King Gjuki and put her arms about his neck and said,

"Here is come to us the greatest hero that may be found, and great help may we have of him: marry thy daughter to him and give him as much wealth as he may wish, and let him find his delight here!" The King answered,

"It is a rare thing to make offer of one's daughter; but there is more honor in offering her to him than in receiving other men's bidding."

One evening Gudrun was pouring out the ale; Sigurd saw that she was a fair woman and most courtly in her bearing.

Five half-years Sigurd abode there, and they dwelt in friendship and renown together. Now the King spoke with him one time and Gjuki said,

"Great service hast thou done us, Sigurd: and much strength hast thou given our realm." Gunnar said,

"We will do all things, Sigurd, if so be that thou

wilt tarry here: we offer thee both the realm and our sister, which none other might have, though he asked them of us." Sigurd said,

"My thanks for the great honor ye do me! I shall take what ye offer." And now they swore blood-brotherhood, as though they had been born of one mother. A splendid feast was held, which lasted many days; and Sigurd was wedded to Gudrun. There were games and merrymaking of every sort and each day surpassed the one before.

The brothers journeyed far over the land and did many glorious deeds; they slew many a prince, and no other men wrought so valorously as they. Thereafter they came home with great stores of booty.

Sigurd gave Gudrun to eat of the heart of Fafnir, and after that she was wiser than before, and more grim. Their son was called Sigmund.

One day Grimhild went to her son Gunnar and said,

"In all things save one thine estate is flourishing: that is that thou art without a wife. Woo thou Brynhild! That is the most worshipful match for thee, and Sigurd will ride with thee." Gunnar answered,

"Fair she is, indeed, and I am not unwilling." He told this to his father and brothers and to Sigurd, and they all urged it upon him.

CHAPTER XXVII

THEY made skilful preparation for their journey, and they rode over dale and hill until they came to King Budli. Here they made the offer of marriage, and he received it well, provided only that Brynhild did not refuse; he said that she was so proud that she would marry only that man whom she willed. Then they rode to Hlymdale, and Heimir made them welcome. Gunnar told his errand. Heimir said that the choice was hers to take whom she would. He said that her hall lay not far off, and he believed that she would take that man only as husband who would ride through the flaming fire that surrounded her hall.

They found this fire and the hall, and they saw a burg roofed with gold, and flames burning about it. Gunnar rode on the steed Goti, and Hogni on the steed Holkvi. Gunnar spurred his horse on towards the fire, but it drew back. Sigurd said,

"Why dost thou retreat, Gunnar?" He answered,

"My steed will not go into the fire," and he asked Sigurd to lend him Grani.

"Thou art free to take him!" said Sigurd. Gunnar now tried again to ride into the fire, but Grani

would not. So Gunnar might not pass through that fire; but they changed shapes, as Grimhild had taught the two of them. After that Sigurd rode on; he had the sword Gram in his hand, and golden spurs on his feet. Grani leaped forward into the fire when he felt the spurs. Then there was a great noise, and the flames were stirred up violently and the earth shook; the fire rose up to the very heavens. No man had dared to do this before. It was as if he rode in great darkness. Then the fire died down, and he went into the hall. Thus the lay tells:

The fire roared fierce and the earth was shaken,
The flames flared up to the sky;
Few were the princes dared pass by the way
Where the fire was burning high.

Sigurd smote Grani with the touch of his sword;
The fire grew slaked and dim;
The flames burnt low, but the harness gleamed
That Regin had given him.

And when Sigurd came in through the fire he found a fair dwelling, and in it sat Brynhild. She asked who he was. He said he was Gunnar, Gjuki's son, "and thou art granted me to be my wife, with thy father's and foster-father's consent, if I should

ride through thy flickering flames according to thy choosing." She said,

"I scarcely know what I should answer to this." Sigurd stood upright on the floor of the hall and leaned on the hilt of his sword, and he said to Brynhild,

"In return for this I shall pay a great dowry in gold and fine treasure." Heavy-hearted she answered him from her high-seat, where she sat like a swan on the wave, being clad in byrnie and helm and sword.

"Gunnar!" she said, "speak not of such things with me, save if thou art foremost of all men: thou shalt slay those who have wooed me, if thou art bold enough to do it; I have gone into battle with the King of Miklagard, and our weapons were dyed in blood, and such things are still my desire." He answered,

"Great deeds hast thou wrought, but now thou must call to mind thine oath, that if any man should ride through this fire thou wouldst follow him." She granted that his answer was true, and the token of his speech; she arose and made him welcome. There he remained three nights, and they lay in one bed. He took his sword Gram and laid it naked between them. She asked why he did it; and he said

that it was fated for him to hold his bridal thus or else receive his bane. He took from her the ring that was Andvari's treasure, which he had given her before, and in its stead he gave her another ring from Fafnir's hoard.

After that he rode away through the same fire to his fellows, and they changed shapes again, and then they rode to Hlymdale and told how the wooing had gone. The same day Brynhild went home to her foster-father and told him in secret that a king had come to her, "and he rode through my flickering flames and said he had come to take me for his own, and that his name was Gunnar. I said that Sigurd alone might do that, to whom I swore faith on that rock, and that he is my first husband."

Heimir said it would have to be so. Brynhild said, "Aslaug, Sigurd's daughter and mine, shall be fostered here with thee."

The kings now returned home, but Brynhild went to her father. Grimhild received the princes well and thanked Sigurd for his help. A feast was now made ready, and many folk came to it; King Budli came with his daughter and his son Atli, and the feast lasted many days. When it was over Sigurd recalled all his oaths to Brynhild, but he made no

sign. Brynhild and Gunnar were present at the rejoicings and they drank good wine together.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ONE day Brynhild and Gudrun went to the river Rhine to bathe, and Brynhild waded farther out into the water. Gudrun asked what that meant; Brynhild said,

"Why should I make myself equal to thee in this rather than aught else? Methinks that my father is richer than thine, and my husband has wrought many a glorious deed, and he rode through the flaming fire; but thy husband, forsooth, was a vassal of King Hjalprek." Gudrun answered angrily,

"Thou wouldst be wiser to hold thy tongue than to speak ill of my husband, for all men say that none has ever been his like in the whole world. It ill befits thee to speak ill of him, for he was thy first husband, and he slew Fafnir and rode through the flaming fire when thou thoughtest he was Gunnar; and he it was who lay by thee and took from thee Andvari's ring. Behold, thou mayest know it again!"

Brynhild saw the ring and knew it, and she turned pale as though she were dead. She went

home again and spoke not a word that evening. And when Sigurd went to bed Gudrun asked him,

"Why is Brynhild so sad?" Sigurd answered,

"I do not yet clearly know, but I suspect that soon we shall all know more fully." Gudrun said,

"Why is she not contented with riches and joy and the praise of all men, and the husband that she desired?" Sigurd answered,

"Where was she when she said that she had the most valiant man as husband, and the one she most desired?" Gudrun answered,

"I shall ask her tomorrow whom she would most desire to have." Sigurd said,

"I must bid thee not to do that; thou shalt have to repent it if thou dost so."

Next morning they sat in the bower together, and Brynhild was silent. Then Gudrun said,

"Be merry, Brynhild! Art thou vexed by what was said between us? What is there that stands in the way of thy pleasure?" Brynhild answered,

"Evil alone moves thee to this; thou hast a cruel heart."

"Nay," said Gudrun, "be not so, but tell me rather." Brynhild replied,

"Ask only those things that would be better for thee to know; that befits a noble woman: it is good

to be content with a fair lot, so long as all things go as thou wouldst!" Gudrun answered,

"It is over-early to boast about that; but thou speakest prophetically. Why dost thou goad me thus? I have done nought to vex thee." Brynhild answered,

"Thou hast won Sigurd, and thou shalt pay for it, for I can not bear that thou hast had delight of him and of the great treasure." Gudrun said,

"I did not know of your speech together; and my father might well arrange a marriage for me, where thou wert not concerned." Brynhild answered,

"We have had no secret speech, and yet we two swore oaths together; and ye knew that ye were betraying me, and that shall be revenged!" Gudrun replied,

"Thou art better wedded than befits thee, and thy overwhelming pride will have an ill abatement, and many will pay dear for it."

"I might have been content," said Brynhild, "if thou didst not have the nobler man." Gudrun answered,

"Thou hast a husband so noble that it can not surely be said who is a greater king; and thereto thou hast enough of riches and fee." Brynhild answered,

"Sigurd slew Fafnir, and that is worth more than all the riches of King Gunnar, as the lay tells:

'Sigurd slew the worm: while the world endures
That deed will ever be fresh in fame;
Thy brother lacked boldness to mount the rock
And ride through the flickering flame.'"

Gudrun answered,

"Grani would not pass into the fire when Gunnar bestrode him, but he dared do it well enough, and there is no need to question his courage." Brynhild said,

"I do not deny that I think ill of Grimhild." Gudrun said,

"Blame her not, for she looks upon thee even as her own daughter." Brynhild answered,

"She it is who began all the evil which stings me now: she gave Sigurd the baleful drink, so that he no longer remembered my name." Gudrun said,

"Many strange things thou art saying; that is a great lie!" Brynhild answered,

"Mayest thou have delight of Sigurd, but only so far as ye have not deceived me! Unworthily do ye rule together; may it go with you as I desire." Gudrun answered,

"More delight shall I have than thou wouldst

wish; but no one ever supposed that he was formerly on too good terms with me—not once." Brynhild answered,

"Thou speakest ill, and thou shalt repent it when thy passion goes from thee; but let us cease from hateful speech." Gudrun said,

"Thou wert the first to cast hateful speech at me, and now thou pretendest thou wouldst make it good, but thy mood is grim beneath thy fair front."

"Let us cease this useless chatter," said Brynhild; "for a long time I kept silence concerning the great woe in my heart; but I love thy brother alone, and let us now speak of something else!" Gudrun said,

"Thy mind can see far ahead to other things!"

And great sorrow came to pass because they went into the river together and Brynhild knew the ring again, and from that arose this quarrel of theirs.

CHAPTER XXIX

AFTER this talk Brynhild took to her bed, and news was brought to King Gunnar that she was sick; he went to see her and asked her what ailed her, but she answered not a word and lay as

if she were dead. And when he pressed hard upon her she answered,

"What hast thou done with the ring I gave thee, which I had of King Budli at our last parting, when ye Gjukings came to him and threatened to burn and destroy unless ye obtained me? At that time he spoke to me and asked me whom I would choose of those who were come; but I offered to protect the land and be chieftain over a third of the host. There were two things before me to choose from: either to be wedded as he willed, or to forfeit all my goods and his friendship together. He said that his friendship availed me more than his anger, and I took counsel with myself whether I should do according to his will or slay many men: it seemed to me that I could not contend with him, and so it came that I promised myself to him who would ride the steed Grani, charged with Fafnir's hoard, through my flickering flames, and kill those men whom I willed. There was none who dared ride through save Sigurd alone; he passed through the fire, for there was no lack of courage in him. He slew the dragon and Regin and five kings besides; not so thou, Gunnar!—thou didst turn pale as a dead man; thou art neither king nor champion. I swore an oath when I was at home with my father

that I would love him alone who was most glorious of all men born, and that is Sigurd; but now I have broken that oath, for he is not mine, and therefore I shall devise his death. I have also to requite Grimhild for great evil done me; there is no woman worse or more dastardly than she." Gunnar answered, so that few might hear him,

"Many false words hast thou spoken, and thou art an evil woman to revile one who is far better than thou; she held her husband dearer than thou dost, nor did she ever torture dead men nor do murder, but she lives in good fame." Brynhild answered,

"I have held no secret meetings, nor done aught that is shameful, for my nature is not so; yet I would be the more ready to slay thee." After that she wished to kill King Gunnar, but Hogni had her fettered. Then Gunnar said,

"I do not wish her to be shackled." She answered,

"Have no care for that, for never shalt thou see me glad again in thy hall: thou shalt never see me drink or play chess, or speak what is in my thoughts, or embroider fair stuffs with gold or give thee counsel"; and she said it was her greatest sorrow that she might not have Sigurd. She sat up and smote her tapestry so that it was riven asunder,

and she bade them open the doors of the bower, so that her lamentations might be heard afar. Now great was her woe, and it was heard throughout the whole town.

Gudrun asked her maids why they were so silent and sad. "What ails you, and why do ye go about like witless folk? What wonder has befallen you?" Then Svafrlod, one of her court women, answered,

"This is an evil day, and our hall is filled with the sound of woe." Then Gudrun said to her friend,

"Arise! We have slept too long! Awaken Brynhild; let us go to our handiwork and be merry."

"I shall never go awaken her," said she, "or speak with her; for many a day she has drunk neither mead nor wine, and the wrath of the gods is on her." Then Gudrun spoke to Gunnar, and said,

"Go see her and tell her that her woe is our grief too." Gunnar answered,

"She has forbidden me to see her or share her goods."

Then Gunnar went to see her, and he tried in many ways to have speech with her, but he received no answer. Then he went away and found Hogni, and asked him to go in to her; he said he was unwilling to do it, but he went none the less and could

get nothing from her. Then they sought out Sigurd and asked him to speak to her. He made no answer. And so that evening passed.

The next day when Sigurd came home from the hunt he met Gudrun and said,

"It seems to me that Brynhild's fever is very heavy, and she will die of it." Gudrun answered,

"My lord, it is a great wonder; she has now slept seven days, and no one has dared to awaken her." Sigurd answered,

"She is not asleep, but is planning fearful things against me." Then Gudrun spoke, weeping,

"It is a great woe to know of thy death; go to her rather and speak to her and see if her anger may not be lessened. Give her gold and soften her wrath with it."

Sigurd went out and found her hall door open; he thought she was asleep, and he lifted the covers from her and said,

"Awake, Brynhild! The sun is shining over all the town, and thou hast slept long enough; cast off thy sorrow and be glad!" She said,

"How is it thou darest to come and see me? None deceived me worse than thou." Sigurd asked,

"Why wilt thou not speak with those about thee? What vexes thee?" Brynhild answered,

"I shall tell thee the cause of my wrath!" Sigurd said,

"Thou art bespelled if thou thinkest me grimly disposed towards thee. And thy husband was of thy choosing."

"Nay," said she, "Gunnar did not ride through the fire to me, and he did not give me my price of slaughters. I wondered at the man who came into my hall, and I thought I recognized thine eyes, and yet I could not see clearly because of the shroud that lay over my fate." Sigurd said,

"I am no nobler than the sons of Gjuki; they slew the Danish king and a great prince, the brother of King Budli." Brynhild answered,

"I have many wrongs to pay them for: do not call these griefs to my mind. Thou, Sigurd, didst slay the dragon and ride through the fire for my sake, and the sons of Gjuki were not there then." Sigurd answered,

"I was not thy husband and thou wert not my wife, but a noble king paid for thy dower." Brynhild answered,

"Never were my thoughts mirthful towards Gunnar, but they are grim towards him now, though I conceal it from the others."

"It is a strange thing," said Sigurd, "to have no

love for such a king. But what is it that vexes thee most? Methinks his love should be dearer to thee than gold." Brynhild answered,

"Most bitter of all my woes it is that I might not contrive to stain a sharp sword with thy blood." Sigurd replied,

"Have no fear; in a short time from now a sharp sword will indeed stand in my heart, and thou mayest pray for no worse for thyself, for thou shalt not live after me; but few days are left to us hereafter." Brynhild answered,

"Thy words are portents of peril; since the time ye betrayed the whole of my joy, I care not a whit for my life." Sigurd answered,

"Live thou and love King Gunnar and me; I shall give all my wealth if thou die not." She said,

"Little dost thou know my mood. Thou dost surpass all men, and yet no woman is more hateful to thee than I." Sigurd answered,

"The truth is otherwise: I love thee better than myself, though I was betrayed therein. And now it may not be changed; ever, since I could heed my wits again, have I had pain in my heart because thou wert not my wife, but I bore it as I might since I dwelt in a king's hall. And still I was well pleased that we were together. It may also come to pass as

was foretold before, and I shall mind it little." Brynhild replied,

"Too late thou comest to tell me that my suffering distresses thee, and now I have no comfort of it." Sigurd answered,

"It is my wish that we might enter one bed together, and that thou shouldst become my wife." Brynhild answered,

"Such a thing may not be said. I will not have two kings mine in the same hall, and I shall sooner lose my life than deceive King Gunnar." Then she reminded him how they met on the mountain and pledged their faith together, "but that is all changed now, and I will live no longer."

"I had forgotten thy name," said Sigurd, "and I knew thee not again until thou wert married, and that is the greatest woe of all." Then said Brynhild,

"I swore an oath to have only that man who rode through my flaming fire. That oath I shall keep, or die."

"Rather than thou shouldst die, I will take thee and leave Gudrun," cried Sigurd; and so greatly were his sides swollen with grief that the rings of his byrnie burst.

"I desire thee not," said Brynhild; "thee, nor any other."

Sigurd went away, even as is told in the Lay of Sigurd:

When their speech was done, bold Sigurd went forth,
Grieving and heavy of heart;
So great was his woe that the rings of steel
On his byrnie were broken apart.

And when he came into the hall, Gunnar asked him if he knew now the cause of her grief, and whether she had recovered her speech. Sigurd said she could talk. Then Gunnar went to see her again, and asked her what ailed her, and whether there was any cure.

"I do not wish to live," said Brynhild, "for Sigurd has betrayed me, and thee no less, when thou gavest him leave to come into my bed. But I shall not have two husbands in one hall, and that must be Sigurd's bane or thine or mine, for he has told Gudrun all about it, and she mocks me."

CHAPTER XXX

AFTER that Brynhild went out and sat down by the wall of her bower and made great lamentation; she said that all things were hateful

to her, both land and lordship, since she might not have Sigurd. Gunnar came to her again, and she said,

"Thou shalt forfeit thy kingdom and wealth, thy life and me; I shall go home to my kinsmen and sit there in sorrow unless thou slay Sigurd and his son; for thou shalt not foster the whelp of a wolf!" Gunnar was now sore oppressed in spirit, and he knew not what was best to do, for he was bound to Sigurd by oaths; but his mind was vexed with many changes, and it seemed to him it would be the greatest shame if his wife should leave him. Gunnar said, "Brynhild is dearer to me than aught else; she is the most famous of women, and rather shall I lose my life than forfeit her love." And he called his brother Hogni to him and said, "A heavy choice is before me"; he told him that he would slay Sigurd, because he had broken faith with him; "and then," said he, "we shall be rulers over the realm and the treasure." Hogni said,

"It is not fitting to break our oaths by a feud, and we have besides great help from him. So long as the King of Hunland lives, there are no other kings equal to us, and we shall never have such another brother-in-law. Think how well it is for us to have such a one. I see whence all this comes: it

is Brynhild's doing, but her counsel will lead us only into shame and disgrace." Gunnar answered,

"It shall be done, and I can tell thee by what device: let us egg on Gutthorm our brother to the deed, for he is young and knows but little and is not bound by oaths." Hogni said,

"That seems to me to be ill-advised; and though it should succeed, we shall have to pay dearly for betraying such a man." Gunnar said,

"Sigurd shall die, or else I shall die myself!" He bade Brynhild arise and be gay; she arose, but she said that Gunnar might never come into the same bed with her until that were done.

Then the brothers talked together, and Gunnar said it was sufficient reason for slaying Sigurd because he had taken Brynhild's maidenhead, "and let us egg Gutthorm on to the deed!" said he. So they called him in to their midst and offered him gold and great wealth to gain him over to do it; they took a snake and wolf's flesh and let them seethe together, and of this they gave him to eat, as the skald says:

The flesh of the wolf and flesh of the snake
They gave to Gutthorm to eat his fill
Ere desire for murder was kindled in him,
And the hero was hardened to do their will.

With this food he became so bold and fierce and so heedful of Grimhild's urging that he gave his word to do this deed, and they promised him great honor in return. Sigurd suspected none of this deceit; besides, he might not contend with his fate or his appointed lot, nor did he think that he was deserving of treachery at their hands.

Gutthorm went into Sigurd's room towards morning, while he was lying there in bed, but when the prince looked at him he did not dare to strike him, and so he went out again. A second time he entered the room, but Sigurd's eyes were so keen that few men dared look upon them. The third time he went in, Sigurd was asleep. Gutthorm drew his sword and thrust it into him so deep that the point of it stood in the bolster under him. Sigurd awoke when he felt the wound, while Gutthorm was going out by the door; he took his sword Gram and cast it after him: it smote him in the back and cut him asunder so that the feet fell one way and the head and hands fell the other way, back into the room.

Gudrun was sleeping in Sigurd's arms, but she awoke to unspeakable woe, for she found herself covered with his blood. She wept and made great lamentation, so that Sigurd raised himself up on the pillow and said,

"Weep not; thy brothers live still to solace thee; but I leave a son too young to defend himself from his foes. They have provided for themselves but poorly, for they will not gain them a more likely brother-in-law to ride to battle with them, nor such another nephew, if he might be permitted to live. And now it has come to pass even as was foretold long since, though I refused to believe it, for no man may struggle against his fate. It is Brynhild who has done this, she who loved me more than any other man; but I swear this oath, that I never wronged Gunnar, but I have always kept our oaths, nor was I too great a friend of his wife. If I had known this before, if I could be on my feet with my weapons, many a man would lose his life before I fell, and all the brothers would be slain together, and it would be more difficult for them to slay me than the fiercest bull or wild boar."

And with that the prince died. Gudrun breathed hard and painfully; and Brynhild laughed aloud to hear her sigh. Then said Gunnar,

"Thou dost not laugh because thy heart is glad, else why art thou so pale? Thou art a monstrous woman, and it is most likely that thy doom is upon thee. Very fitting it would be now if thou hadst thy brother Atli slain before thine eyes; for we have to

sit by the bodies of brother-in-law and brother's slayer!" She answered,

"No one will complain that there has been too little slaying here, but King Atli cares not a whit for thy threats or anger, and he will live longer than any of you and have greater might." Hogni said,

"It has now come to pass as Brynhild foretold, and we shall never make good this evil deed." Gudrun said,

"My kinsmen have slain my husband. Now ye must ride at the head of the host, and when ye come into battle ye shall discover that Sigurd is no longer at your side, and then ye will know that Sigurd was your strength and good fortune. If he had had sons like himself, ye might have had support of them and of his kin."

CHAPTER XXXI

NOW no man could understand why Brynhild had ordered with laughter the deed that she now lamented with tears. She said,

"I dreamed, Gunnar, that my bed was cold, for thou wilt ride into the hands of thy foes, and all thy race must suffer too, for ye are breakers of

oaths, and thou didst lightly forget that ye two mixed your blood together, Sigurd and thou, when thou didst slay him. Ill hast thou repaid him for all that he did in thy behalf, letting thee be always foremost. And when he came to me he gave proof how well he kept his oaths, for he laid his sharp-edged sword between us, which was tempered in poison; but soon indeed ye contrived to injure both him and me. When I was at home with my father and had all that I might desire—and little did I intend that any of you should ever be my husband, when the three of you came riding to our court—then Atli took me aside and asked me if I would wed the man who rode Grani, who was not your like; and then I promised myself to the son of King Sigmund, and to none other! But ye shall have no good of this, though I die for it." Then Gunnar arose and cast his arms about her neck and begged her to live and receive riches of him, and all the others besides would have let her from dying, but she thrust them from her and said it would be of no avail to hinder her from the thing she desired.

Then Gunnar called upon Hogni and asked his advice; he bade him go to her and try if he might soothe her, saying that there was great need to

lessen her woe until some time should pass. Hogni answered,

"Let no man hinder her from dying, for she has been of no good to us nor to any man since she came hither."

Then she bade them take a great store of gold, and she summoned to her all those who wished to receive riches of her. After that she took a sword and stabbed herself beneath the arm; she fell back against her pillows and said,

"Let each who wills take from this gold." They all kept silence. Brynhild spoke again. "Take the gold and use it well!" Again Brynhild spoke to Gunnar. "Now I shall briefly tell thee how things shall fare hereafter: by the devices of Grimhild and her magic craft, thou shalt soon be reconciled with Gudrun. The daughter of Sigurd and Gudrun shall be called Swanhild, and she will be the fairest born of all women. Gudrun will be given to Atli, herself unwilling. Thou thyself shalt desire to have Oddrun, but Atli will forbid that, and therefore ye two will have secret meetings, and she shall greatly love thee. Atli will betray thee and put thee in a snake-pit, but later he shall be slain and all his sons, for Gudrun will kill them all. After that the great billows will carry her to the burg of King Jonakr, and

there she shall bear goodly sons. Swanhild will be sent away to another land and wedded to King Jormunrek, but the evil counsels of Bikki shall do her to death, and therewith is the whole of thy race destroyed, and the woes of Gudrun are still increased. Now do I make thee, Gunnar, one last prayer: do thou have a funeral pyre made on the level plain for all of us—for Sigurd and me, and for those that were slain with him; let it be hung with cloths dyed red with men's blood, and burn me there by the side of the Hunnish king, and at his other side put my men, two at his head and two at his feet, and likewise two hawks, for then it is equally divided. But between us lay the drawn sword, even as it was before when we went into one bed together and were called by the names of wedded folk. The door shall not close on his heels if I follow hard after him, and our burial shall not be poor if there attend him the five maids and eight slaves that my father gave me, and if they also are burnt who were slain with Sigurd. I might speak further if I were not so sore, but the wound is open and gushing; yet all I have said is the truth."

Then Sigurd's body was prepared according to the ancient custom, and a great pyre was built, and when it was kindled the body of Sigurd Fafnir's

Bane was laid upon it, together with his three-year-old son, whom Brynhild had let slay, and Gutthorm's. And when the pyre was all ablaze, Brynhild went out upon it. She told her handmaidens to take all the gold she gave them; and after that Brynhild died and was burnt there with Sigurd, and that was the end of their two lives.

CHAPTER XXXII

NOW all who heard these tidings said that no other man would ever be his like in this world, and none such would ever be born again as Sigurd was; and his name would never grow old in the German tongue nor in the Northlands, so long as the world endures.

It is told that one day Gudrun spoke while she was sitting in her bower, and said,

"Better was my life when I had Sigurd, for he surpassed all other men as gold does iron, or as the leek does other herbs, or as the hart excels other beasts, until my brothers grew envious of my surpassing noble husband; they could not sleep until they had slain him. A great noise made Grani, when he saw his master wounded. I spoke with him as

with a man, but he bent him to the earth, and he knew that Sigurd was fallen."

Then Gudrun departed out into the forest, and she heard on all sides about her the cries of wolves, and she thought it would be merrier to die than to live.

She went on until she came to the hall of King Half, and she sat there in Denmark with Thora, King Hakon's daughter, for seven half-years, and she was made welcome with all good cheer. She wove a tapestry and wrought upon it many a glorious deed and comely sport, such as were in use in those days, swords and byrnies and all the trappings of a king; also the ships of King Sigmund, as they sailed from the land; and they wove into it the combat of Sigar and Siggeir in the south at Fjon: this was their delight, and Gudrun was somewhat comforted of her sorrow.

Grimhild found out where Gudrun was harbored: she summoned her sons to her and asked them whether they would give Gudrun recompense for her husband and son, and said it was due her from them. Gunnar spoke and said he was willing to give her gold and so make good her affliction to her. They sent for their friends and made ready their horses, their helmets, shields, swords and byrnies

and all sorts of war-gear. In the most seemly manner they prepared their journey, and no hero who was accounted great tarried at home; their steeds were armored, and every knight wore a golden helm or one brightly polished. Grimhild set out on the journey with them, for she said that she could not sit at home when it was so needful for them to win their desire.

They had five hundred men in all, and many mighty chiefs: Valdemar of Denmark, and Eymod, and Jarisleif. They entered the hall of King Half. Langobards and Franks and Saxons were there together, clad in full war-gear and red fur cloaks, as the lay tells:

Bright helms they wore, and burnished weeds,
And swords by their side, as they rode their steeds.

They offered fair speech and rich gifts to their sister, but she trusted none of them. After that Grimhild brought her a charmed drink, and this she had to drink; and after that she had no memory of any feud. That drink was mixed with charms of earth and sea, and the blood of her son; and letters of all kinds were cut in the horn and reddened with blood, as is here told:

Staves of all sorts (I know not the whole)
Were reddened and cut in that horn:
Snake of the Haddings' land, beasts' entrails,
And uncut ear of corn.

With herbs of the wood and acorn burnt
And evil spells that beer was made,
Of entrails and soot and swine's liver boiled,
That their hateful strife might be allayed.

After that, when they were agreed and good will was between them again, they made merry cheer together. When Grimhild saw Gudrun she said to her,

"Hail to thee, daughter! I give thee gold and treasures of all sorts to be thine after thy father; precious rings and bed-hangings woven by the noblest Hunnish maids. In this wise is thy husband's loss made good. I shall wed thee in time to King Atli the mighty, so that thou shalt rule over his wealth. But thou shalt not abandon thy kinsmen for the sake of thy husband, but rather shalt thou do as we bid thee." Gudrun answered,

"Never shall I take Atli as husband; it befits not to increase our kin through him." Grimhild answered,

"Thou wilt not nourish thy hatred longer, or

fancy that Sigurd and Sigmund are living, if thou hast sons." Gudrun said,

"I can never give up the thought of him, for he surpassed all other men." Grimhild said,

"It is fated for thee to wed this king, and none other." Gudrun said,

"Offer me not this king in marriage, for evil alone will come of it to our race: he will deal evilly with thy sons, and after that a grim revenge must follow."

Grimhild was vexed by this speech concerning her sons, and she said,

"Do as we bid thee, and thou shalt have great honor therefor, and our love, and two burgs that are called Vinbjorg and Valbjorg." And her words had such weight that the thing was done. Gudrun said,

"Then it shall be so, but it is against my will; for no good shall come of it, but rather harm."

Then they mounted their horses, and the women were stowed in wains; and so they journeyed seven days by horseback, and seven by ship, and another seven across the land, until they came to their great hall. Here many folk came out to greet her, and a fine feast was prepared, as had been agreed before between them, and it was held with great pride and splendor. At this feast Atli held wedding with Gud-

run, but her heart never laughed towards him, and they dwelt together with little cheer.

CHAPTER XXXIII

NOW it is told that on a certain night King Atli awoke from his sleep and spoke to Gudrun.

"I dreamed," said he, "that thou didst strike at me with a sword." Gudrun told the meaning of that, and said that to dream of steel meant fire; "and it is because of thy pride, in that thou dost think thyself better than all others." Atli said,

"I dreamed again and methought there were two reeds growing here, which I wished to see ever spared; but afterwards they were torn up by the roots and reddened with blood, and offered to me as food at table. Again I dreamed, and methought that two hawks flew from my hands; they had no food, and so they died. Methought their hearts were mixed with honey, and I ate thereof; and after that it seemed to me that two fair whelps lay before me and cried aloud, and I ate of their flesh against my will." Gudrun said,

"These dreams are not good, but they must needs

be fulfilled: thy sons are death-doomed, and many an evil hap must befall us."

"I dreamed again," said he, "that I lay abed and my death was upon me."

Now time passed, and there was still coldness between them. King Atli wondered where was stowed the great treasure that had been Sigurd's, but now only Gunnar and his brothers knew of it. Atli was a great and wily king; he had many men and much treasure. He knew that Gunnar and his brothers were far richer, and that none might be compared with them in wealth. He took counsel and decided to send messengers to the brothers and bid them come to a feast and receive all sorts of honor from him. The leader of those sent was called Vingi. The Queen knew of this counsel, and she suspected that there was treachery in it towards her brothers. She cut runes and knitted a wolf's hair into a ring and gave it to the King's messengers. Then they departed on the King's errand. Before they came ashore, Vingi looked at the runes, and he changed them in such wise that Gudrun seemed to urge her brothers by means of them to visit the King.

Now they came to the hall of King Gunnar; they were well received, and great fires were built for

them, and they drank joyously of the best drink. Then Vingi said,

"King Atli has sent me hither, and it is his wish that ye visit him and receive great honor and gifts of him; helmets and shields, swords and byrnies, gold and rich garments, horses and troops and fee; to you he would most willingly yield his realm." Then Gunnar turned his head and spoke to Hogni,

"Shall we accept his bidding? He offers to give us great riches, but I know of no king who has as much as we, for we own all the gold that once lay on Gnita-heath, and we have great store-houses full of treasure and swords and all manner of armor. I know that my horse is the best, my sword the sharpest, and my gold the richest." Hogni answered,

"I marvel at this invitation, for he has seldom done the like, and it may well be unwise to journey thither to visit him. Moreover I had cause for wonder when I looked on the treasures he sent us, for I saw among them a wolf's hair knit into a golden ring; perhaps Gudrun thinks his spirit is wolfish towards us, and therefore she does not wish us to come."

At this Vingi showed him the runes that he said Gudrun had sent them. Then most of the folk went to sleep, but they remained there drinking with a

few men. Kostbera, Hogni's fair wife, went and looked at the runes; she was pouring out the drink for them there with Glaumvor, Gunnar's wife, a very noble woman. The two kings became very drunk. Vingi saw this, and he said,

"I cannot conceal from you that King Atli is now too aged and infirm to defend his realm, and his sons are over-young and of little avail; he will give you the rule over his kingdom while they are so small, for he would most gladly yield the use of it to you!"

Now since these two things came to pass, that Gunnar was drunk, and a great kingdom was offered him—and moreover, he might not combat his fate —he promised to go thither. This he told to his brother Hogni, who answered,

"Thy promise must needs stand, and I shall follow thee, but I am not eager to make this journey."

CHAPTER XXXIV

WHEN all men had drunk their fill they went to sleep. Kostbera began to look at the runes and read out the letters; and she saw that something new had been cut upon that which was be-

neath, and that the runes were counterfeit. But by her wisdom she perceived what was there, and after that she went to bed by her husband. And when they awoke she said to Hogni,

"It is thy intent to journey hence, but that is unwisely undertaken; go rather another time! Thou art little skilled in reading runes if thou thinkest thy sister has invited thee to come. I too read the runes and marvelled that a woman so wise had falsely cut them; but underneath is a matter that concerns your death. Either she lacked the right staves, or others have falsified them. And now thou shalt hear my dream. Methought that a great river flooded in upon us here, and the beams of the hall were broken down." He said,

"Thou hast evil forebodings very often. It is not my way to deal wrongfully with men who deserve it not; and I think Atli will receive us well." She said,

"Thou mayest test it thyself, but there is no friendship back of this invitation. I dreamed again, and methought that another river broke in here, roaring terribly, and destroyed the dais and broke thy legs and thy brother's. Surely that must mean something." He answered,

"What thou didst think of as a river must be

fields, and when we cross them the high grass-seeds often reach up to our legs."

"I dreamed that thy bed-covers were burning, and that fire was leaping up from the hall." He said,

"I know quite well wherefore: my clothes are lying here unheeded, and they it must be that burnt, when thou didst dream of the bed-covers."

"Methought I saw a bear come in here," said she, "and it broke asunder the king's high-seat and shook its paws so that we were all afraid, and it had us all in its mouth at once, so that we could do nought against it, and great was our terror thereat." He said,

"That white bear of thine must mean a great storm."

"Methought an eagle flew in here through the hall, and sprinkled me and all of us with blood, and that must betoken ill, for it seemed to me that that was the double of King Atli." He answered,

"We often make great slaughter of cattle and cut them down for our sport; and if one dreams of eagles it means cattle; but Atli's spirit is friendly towards us."

And so they left this talk.

CHAPTER XXXV

NOW it is to be said of Gunnar that the same talk passed between him and his wife Glaumvor when they awoke, for she likewise told him many dreams which seemed to her to betoken deceit, but he gave to all a contrary meaning.

"This was one of them," said she, "that methought a bloody sword was borne here into the hall, and thou wert smitten therewith, and wolves howled at both ends of it." The King answered,

"Little hounds will bite us there; barking of dogs is often betokened by garments colored with blood." She said,

"Again I dreamed that I saw sad-looking women come into the hall and they chose thee as husband; it may be that they were thy guardian fates." He answered,

"These things are hard to rede. No man may shun the close of his days, and it is likely indeed that we have but a short time left."

In the morning they arose and wished to be off, but others held them back. Gunnar said to one of the men who was called Fjornir,

"Get thee up, and give us good wine to drink from a great beaker, for it may be that this will be our last merrymaking. If we die, the wolf will gain the gold, but the bear will not fail to bite hard with his tusks!"

After that his folk led them forth, and many tears were shed for them. Hogni's son cried,

"Farewell, and good luck be with you!"

The greater part of their men remained behind. Solar and Snevar, sons of Hogni, went with them, and a mighty hero called Orking, the brother of Bera. The people fared with them down to the ship, and all of them tried to keep the kings from departing, but it was of no avail. Then said Glaumvor,

"It is very likely, Vingi, that a great misfortune will come of thy journey hither, and tidings of great moment will be heard of thy going." He answered,

"I swear that I have not lied; may the gallows and all evil spirits have me else!" He spared himself little in such words. Bera said,

"Farewell, and have good luck!" Hogni answered,

"Be merry, whatever may befall us!" And this was the parting of their destinies.

After that they rowed so swiftly and so mightily that almost half the keel of the ship went under. They pulled hard and fast on the oars, so that both rollers and tholes were broken, and when they landed they did not make fast their ships. Thereafter they rode forward on their noble steeds through a dark forest, and after a time they saw the King's dwelling; from it came a great noise and clatter of arms, and they saw a host of warriors making them ready and all the gates were crowded with men. They rode up to the burg and found it closed. Hogni broke open the gate and they rode in. Then said Vingi,

"Thou mightest better have left that undone. Now wait ye here until I seek out a gallows tree for all of you; I asked you to come hither with fair cheer, but treachery lay beneath it. In but a little time now ye shall all hang aloft!" Hogni answered,

"We shall not yield before thee, and I do not think that we ever shrank back where it befits men to fight. There is little use to try to frighten us, for it will go badly with thee!"

Then they cast him down and struck him to death with the blunt ends of their axes.

CHAPTER XXXVI

NOW they rode into the King's hall. King Atli made ready his men for battle, and the two hosts were so drawn up that there was a court-yard between them. Said Atli,

"Be welcome here, and give over to me all the gold that is my due, the treasure that Sigurd once had and is now Gudrun's." Gunnar said,

"Thou shalt never have that treasure, but before we yield up our lives thou shalt find that thou hast to do here with bold men, if thou wilt make war on us. It may be that thou wilt give a noble feast here to the eagle and the wolf!"

"A long time I have had it in my mind to take your lives, to gain the gold and to pay you back for the treason ye wrought on your surpassing great brother-in-law, and I shall take revenge for him now." Hogni answered,

"It will help thee little to be nourishing that plan long, for thou art all unready."

Then they fell to fighting fiercely, with spears and arrows at first. These tidings were brought to Gudrun, and when she heard them she grew fierce, and cast her mantle from her. She went out and

hailed those who were newly come, and kissed her brothers lovingly; and this was their last speech together. She said,

"I thought I had contrived that ye should not come, but no man may fight against his doom." She asked them, "Would it be of any avail to try to make peace?" But they all denied it with one voice. She saw that the game went sorely against her brothers, and her mood became fierce; she put on a byrnie and took a sword and fought side by side with her brothers as if she had been the doughtiest man. All folk said alike that they had never seen a better defense than she made. There was great slaughter of men, and yet the valor of the brothers still surpassed that of all other men. The battle lasted until the middle of the day. Gunnar and Hogni charged through the ranks of King Atli, and it is said that the whole field was bathed in blood. The sons of Hogni also pressed hard on the foe. King Atli said,

"We had a fair host and great, and many heroes, but now many of us are fallen. Grievous is my score against you, for ye have slain nineteen of my best warriors, and only eleven remain."

Then a truce was declared in the combat. King Atli said, "We were four brothers in all, and now I alone am left. I won a great match for myself,

thinking that it would serve me well. I had a wife who was fair and wise, proud and fierce, but I had no profit of her wisdom, for we were seldom agreed. Ye have now slain a great number of my kinsmen, cheated me of treasure and realm, and done my sister to death—and that is the greatest grief of all." Hogni said,

"Why dost thou say that? Thou didst break peace first: thou didst take my kinswoman and starve her to death and murder her, thou didst seize all the treasure too, and that was not done like a king. It is laughable to hear thee recount thy sorrows, and I thank the gods that it is going ill with thee."

CHAPTER XXXVII

NOW King Atli urged his men to make a fierce attack, they fought sharply, but the Gjukings pressed them close so that King Atli retreated into the hall, and the battle went on there hard and fast. Many men lost their lives in that combat; and the end of it was that all the followers of the brothers were slain, so that only they two were left standing, and many a man was sent to Hel by their weapons. Now they attacked Gunnar, and because of their

greater strength he was taken and put in fetters. After that Hogni fought still with great valor and boldness, and he laid low twenty of King Atli's greatest warriors. He cast many into the fire that was burning in the hall, and all those who beheld him were agreed that no man was his like; but in the end he was overpowered and taken captive. King Atli said,

"It is a wonderful thing how many men have died before him. Now cut out his heart, and let that be his bane!" Hogni said,

"Do as thou wilt, I shall gladly await what thou wouldst have done to me, and thou shalt see that my heart is not afraid. I have known many a hard lot before this, and I have always faced danger gladly so long as I was unwounded; but now I am sore hurt, and thou hast all power over my fate." Then a counsellor of King Atli said,

"I know a better plan: let us rather take the thrall Hjalli, and spare Hogni: the thrall is fit to die, for no matter how long he lives he will ever be wretched."

The thrall heard this and cried aloud, and ran about wherever he thought he might find shelter; he said he had had but plague and ill fortune of their fighting, and said it was an evil day when he

had to die and leave his good food and his swine-keeping. But they caught him and made to stab him with a knife, but he screamed aloud even before he felt its edge. Then Hogni spoke as few are wont to do when they are in such straits, saying that he would gladly have the thrall's life spared, for he could not endure hearing his shrieks, and he cared little to go on with the game: so the thrall was permitted to have his life.

Now both Gunnar and Hogni were put in fetters. King Atli told Gunnar that he must confess to the hiding-place of the gold, if he would receive his life; but he said,

"I must first see the heart of my brother Hogni all bloody." So they seized the thrall a second time, and cut out his heart and carried it before King Gunnar, but he said,

"This may be the heart of Hjalli the Coward; it is unlike the heart of Hogni the Bold. For even now it is trembling, but far more did it quake when it was still in his breast."

Then at King Atli's bidding they went to Hogni and cut out his heart, and so strong was his spirit that he laughed aloud while he suffered this torment, and all men marvelled at his courage, and remem-

bered it afterwards. They showed Gunnar Hogni's heart, and he said,

"Here ye may indeed see the heart of Hogni the Bold, which is most unlike the heart of Hjalli the Coward, for it trembles but little now, and even less while it still lay in his breast. Thou, Atli, must end thy life as we now end ours! Now I alone know where the gold is, and Hogni can no longer tell thee. While both of us were alive my mind was unsure, but now I alone have the decision, and I say that the river Rhine shall have all the gold, rather than that it fall into the hands of the Huns." King Atli said,

"Take the captive away!" And it was done.

Now Gudrun gathered some men together and sought out Atli and said to him,

"Ill fortune befall thee according to thy lack of faith towards my brothers and me!"

Then Gunnar was put in a snake-pit full of many worms, and his hands were fast bound. Gudrun sent him a harp, and he played upon it by reason of his great skill, for he plucked the strings with his toes so excellently well that few men have heard the like, even when hands were needed. So skilfully did he play that all the snakes fell asleep, save for a large and

ugly adder which crept up and stung him to the very heart. And there he died, right bravely.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

KING ATLI was proud of his victory, which seemed very great to him, and he spoke of it to Gudrun with mockery and boast.

"Thou hast now lost thy brothers, Gudrun," said he, "and thou alone wert the cause." She said,

"It is a pleasure for thee to proclaim this slaughter to me now, but it may come to pass that thou wilt repent it when thou hast lived through what is to follow: the heritage that will survive longest is a grimness I shall not let die, and it shall not go well with thee as long as I live." He answered,

"Let us be reconciled: I will make good thy brothers' death with what gold and treasure thou mayest wish." She said,

"I have never been easy to bargain with, and I could only have suffered it while Hogni still lived. Thou canst never make good to me the death of my brothers, but often are we women deprived of our rights by force. Now all my kinsmen are dead

and thou alone dost rule over me. I must accept this lot; let us hold a great funeral feast for my brothers, and at the same time for thy kinsmen."

From this time she spoke to him with fair words, but beneath them her mood was the same as before. He was easy of belief, and trusted her speech when she made it blithe.

She held the funeral feast for her brothers, and Atli likewise for his men, and the banquet was very tumultuous. Thereafter Gudrun brooded much on her woes, and awaited her chance to do the King some great injury. In the evening she took the sons of herself and King Atli as they were playing within doors; the boys became heavy of cheer and asked her what she wished of them. She said,

"Do not ask! It is death for you both." They answered,

"Thou mayest do with your children as thou wilt, and no one will deny thee, but it is shameful for thee to do this."

Then she cut their throats. The King asked her where his sons were, and Gudrun answered,

"I shall tell thee and gladden thy heart therewith. Thou didst cause me great woe when thou didst slay my brothers, and now thou shalt hear my reply: thy sons are dead and their skulls are here, serving

thee as goblets on thy table; thou thyself didst drink of their blood mixed with wine, and I roasted their hearts on a spit and gave them to thee to eat." King Atli answered,

"A grim woman art thou, who couldst murder thy sons and give me their flesh to eat; and little space is there between thine evil deeds." Gudrun said,

"May it be still my delight to do thee the greatest harm, for a king like thee can never be treated sufficiently ill." The King said,

"Thou hast done so dire a misdeed that no man ever heard its like before. Such hardihood is great folly; it might well be that thou shouldst be burnt on a pyre or stoned to death: so much hadst thou got by the way thou hast gone." She said,

"Say that for thyself; I shall die another death." And they exchanged many hateful words.

Hogni had a son, who was called Niflung; he nourished great hatred against King Atli, and told Gudrun that he desired to avenge his father. She was well pleased at this, and they took counsel together. She said it would be a great good fortune if they might bring it to pass. In the evening, when the King had finished drinking, he went to bed, and when he was asleep, Gudrun and Hogni's son came

to him. Gudrun took a sword, and both she and the son of Hogni thrust it into King Atli's breast. He awoke when he felt the wound and said,

"There was no need of binding or making ready here! Who has inflicted this wound on me?" Gudrun said,

"In part I have, and in part the son of Hogni." King Atli said,

"It was not fitting for thee to do this, though thou hadst some cause; thou wert wedded to me by thy kinsmen's will, and I paid down thy dowry for thee: thirty good knights and seemly maids and many other men, and yet thou wouldst never bear thyself here in moderation, unless thou might rule over the lands that King Budli had as well, and thou hast often given my mother cause to sit weeping." Gudrun said,

"Thou hast said many an untrue thing, and I have given no heed. Very often my mood has indeed been harsh, but thou hast greatly increased it. Many times there have been quarrels in thy court, and friends and kinsmen fought together, one provoking another. Far better was my life when I dwelt with Sigurd: we slew kings who were our foes and ruled over their estates, but we gave peace to those who desired it. The chieftains submitted to us, and we made each one rich

according to his will. But later I lost Sigurd, and it seemed to me but a little thing to be called a widow, but of all my woes it seemed to me greatest when I, who was once the wife of the noblest of princes, was wedded to thee, for thou hast never come back from war that thou wast not beaten." King Atli answered,

"That is not true; but nothing will be bettered by these speeches, for I am now worsted. Do honorably by me and let my body have a noble burial." She said,

"I shall give thee splendid burial and have a stone coffin made and wrap thee in fair clothes and take care of all that is needful."

After that he died and she did as she had promised. Then she set fire to the hall. When the warriors awoke in terror they would not submit to the flames, but fell to fighting among themselves, and so they were all slain.

This was the end of King Atli and all his men. Gudrun wished to live no longer after this deed, but her end was not yet come.

Men say that the Volsungs and Gjukings were the bravest and mightiest of all folk in the world, as it is reported in all the ancient lays. With this deed the feud was now brought to an end.

CHAPTER XXXIX

GUDRUN had a daughter by Sigurd who was called Swanhild. She was fairest of all women, and had keen eyes like her father, so that very few dared to look at her straight under the brows. She surpassed other women in beauty as the sun outshines other heavenly bodies.

One time Gudrun went down by the sea and took up stones in her arms and waded out into the water, wishing to destroy herself; but the great waves lifted her out over the sea and supported her until she came at last to the burg of King Jonakr. He was a rich king and had many men. He married Gudrun, and the children they had were Hamdir and Sorli and Erp. Swanhild also was reared there.

CHAPTER XL

JORMUNREK was the name of a mighty king who ruled at that time, and his son was Randver. He called his son to him and said,

"Thou and my counsellor Bikki shall go on an errand for me to King Jonakr. Swanhild the daugh-

ter of Sigurd Fafnir's Bane has been reared there, and she is the fairest maid under the sun. I would have her in marriage rather than any other, and thou shalt woo her in my name." He said,

"It befits me, Lord, to go on thine errand."

He made ready their departure and they set off on the journey. They travelled until they came to the court of King Jonakr, and when they saw Swanhild, they thought she was very beautiful. Randver spoke to the King and said,

"King Jormunrek offers marriage between his house and thine. He has heard tidings of Swanhild and he would have her to wife. It is not likely that she could find a mightier husband."

The King said that that was an honorable match, for Jormunrek was a famous prince. Gudrun said,

"Fortune is an unsteady thing to be trusted, for it may fall out ill!" But because of the wish of the King, and for other reasons, it was so arranged and Swanhild went aboard the ship with worshipful attendants.

She sat on the raised deck by the side of the King's son. Then Bikki said to Randver,

"It would be more fitting for thee to have so fair a woman, rather than a man who is so very old."

This pleased Randver well, and he spoke to her in

friendly wise, and she to him again. Then they reached home and went ashore and met the King. Bikki said,

"It is needful, my lord, for thee to hear what has befallen, though it be hard to tell. Thy son has falsely taken to himself all the love of Swanhild, and she is his mistress; this wrong must not go unrevenged."

Much evil advice had Bikki given him before, but this surpassed all else. The King gave ear to his wicked speeches; his anger was not to be stilled, and he bade them take Randver and hang him on the gallows. And when the prince was led thither he took his hawk and plucked all its feathers out and bade them show this to his father. When the King saw it he said,

"The meaning of this is that he thinks me bereft of honor even as this hawk is of feathers!" and he commanded that his son be released from the gallows. But in the meantime Bikki's will had been done, and Randver was dead. Bikki spoke to him again and said,

"There is none who should be as ill requited as Swanhild. Let her be put to a shameful death!" The King answered,

"We shall do as thou sayest."

Then she was bound by the gates of the burg and horses were set to trample upon her. But when she opened her eyes they dared not tread on her. When Bikki saw that, he said that a bag of skin should be drawn over her head, and it was so done. And thus she was put to death.

CHAPTER XLI

GUDRUN heard of the death of Swanhild, and she said to her sons,

"How can ye sit so content and speak so merrily when Jormunrek has slain your sister and shamefully caused her to be trampled to death by horses? Ye have no spirit like to Hogni's or Gunnar's; they would have avenged their kinswoman." Hamdir answered,

"Thou hadst little praise for Gunnar and Hogni when they killed Sigurd and thou wert stained with his blood; and ill was the revenge thou didst take for thy brothers when thou slewest thine own sons. But we may well put King Jormunrek to death, for we cannot resist the taunts with which we are pressed!" Gudrun now went about laughing aloud. She gave them wine to drink out of great goblets, and after

that she chose them fine large byrnies and other war-weeds. Then said Hamdir,

"Now we part from thee for the last time; thou wilt hear news of us and thou shalt hold one funeral feast for us and for Swanhild."

Then they departed, but Gudrun went to her bower with heavier sorrow than ever before, and she said,

"To three men have I been wedded: first to Sigurd Fafnir's Bane, who was betrayed, and that was the greatest of my woes; then I was given to King Atli, but my heart was so fierce towards him that I slew our sons in my great grief. After that I went down to the sea, but the waves carried me ashore; and then I was wedded to this king. Since then I gave Swanhild in marriage and sent her to a foreign land with great treasures. It is the sorest of my woes next to Sigurd's death, that she was trampled under the hoofs of horses; the grimmest pain was when Gunnar was put in the snake-pit, and the sharpest, when the heart was cut out of Hogni. Better it would be if Sigurd fetched me and I might go with him. No son or daughter remains to comfort me now. Dost thou recall, Sigurd, what we said to each other when we went into one bed together, that thou wouldst come for me and seek me from Hel itself?"

And therewith she ended her lamentations.

CHAPTER XLII

NOW it is to be told that Gudrun had so prepared the armor of her sons that no steel might pierce it, and she bade them not to hurt stones or other large things, and said they would come to harm if they did not obey. And when they had set out they met their brother Erp and asked him how much he would help them. He answered, "As much as hand helps hand or foot helps foot." They thought that was nothing at all, and killed him. After that they went on, and it was not long before Hamdir stumbled; he thrust out his hand and said,

"It may be that Erp spoke truly: I should have fallen if I had not supported myself with my hand."

A little later Sorli stumbled and he thrust out his foot and checked himself and said,

"I should have fallen now if I had not had support of both my feet"; and so they agreed that they had done ill by their brother Erp.

They journeyed on until they came to King Jormunrek; they sought him out and attacked him, and Hamdir cut off both his hands and Sorli both his feet. Then said Hamdir,

"His head would be struck off too if our brother

Erp were living, whom we slew on the way hither. Too late we have seen this, even as the lay tells:

"His head would be hewn if Erp still lived
Our battle-brave brother, slain on the way."

By this they had broken their mother's behest and done hurt to stones. The King's men attacked them, but they defended themselves well and manfully and brought scathe to many of the foe; and no steel could bite them. Then a tall and ancient man with one eye appeared and said,

"Ye are unwise men if ye cannot cause the deaths of these two." The King answered,

"Tell us how we may if thou canst!" He said,

"Ye should stone them to death!"

And so it was done; from all directions stones were cast at them, and this was the bane of Hamdir and Sorli.

THE SAGA OF RAGNAR LODBROK

THE SAGA OF RAGNAR LODBROK

CHAPTER I

HEIMIR heard the tidings of the death of Sigurd and Brynhild in Hlymdale; and their daughter Aslaug whom Heimir was fostering was then three winters old. He knew that the foes of the maid would strive to destroy her and her race. So great was his grief for Brynhild, his foster-child, that he gave no heed to his riches or his rule. He saw that he could not conceal the maid in that place; therefore he made a harp so great that he could put Aslaug into it, together with gold and silver and many jewels, and with it he departed and journeyed far and wide, and finally he came hither to the Northlands. So skilfully was his harp made that he could take it apart and put it together at the joints. It was his custom, on such days as he fared along by waterways and was far from men's dwellings, to take the harp asunder and wash the maid; and he had a leek

that he gave her to eat of; for it is the nature of that herb that a man may live long upon it, though he have no other food. And when she wept he struck his harp, and straightway she was silent again, for Heimir was very skilled in the arts that were known in those times. He also had much precious raiment and gold in the harp together with her.

So he journeyed on until he reached Norway and came to a little dwelling called Spangarheath. Here dwelt a karl named Aki; he had a wife named Grima. These two lived there alone. On that day the man had gone out into the forest, but the woman was at home, and she hailed Heimir and asked him who he was. He said he was a poor beggar, and asked her for shelter. She said there were not so many coming by that way that she could not take him in, if he was in need of harborage.

When it grew late Heimir said it would be a most welcome comfort to him if he might have some fire first, and later be led to the place where he was to sleep. When the woman had kindled the fire he set the harp up beside him on the seat. She was very talkative, and she glanced often at the harp, for she saw fringes of costly raiment hanging out from it; and while he was warming himself by the fire she saw a rich gold circlet beneath his tatters, for the clothes

he wore were very poor. When he had warmed himself as much as seemed needful to him, he ate his evening meal, and thereafter she bade him follow her to the place where he was to sleep that night. She said it would be better for him to rest outside than within, "for my husband and I often talk much when he comes home." Heimir told her to do as she thought best.

The two of them now went out together; and Heimir took the harp along with him. The woman led him to a barley-shed, and told him to tarry therein, for she said she expected him to enjoy sound sleep there. After that she went away and busied herself with things that were to be done, and he laid himself down to sleep.

When the evening had grown late, Aki came home; Grima had done but little of her work, and he was tired when he came in, and likewise in bad temper because of all she had left undone in the house. He said that good luck was unevenly divided between them, since he had to work each day beyond his might, while she would not do aught that was useful.

"Be not angry, husband," said she, "for it may be that in a short time thou wilt gain the wherewithal to make us happy our life long."

"What is that?" asked he. She answered,

"A man has come here to seek shelter, and I think he has great riches with him. He is now advanced in years and very tired, but he must have been in his day a mighty champion; I have never seen his like, though he appears now to be weary and heavy with sleep." The man said,

"It seems unwise to me to betray the few folk who come our way." She answered,

"Thou must long remain a man of small account, since everything of the sort seems so weighty in thine eyes; but now thou must choose the one thing or the other: either thou slayest him, or I take him as husband, and then we two shall drive thee away. And I can tell thee the speech he made me this evening, though that will seem to thee a matter of little moment: he spoke lovingly to me, and it is my intent to take him as husband and kill thee or drive thee away if thou wilt not do as I will."

Now it is said that the man was entirely subject to his wife's dominion, and she pressed him so hard that he yielded to her urging. He took his axe and whetted it well, and when he was ready he followed her to the place where Heimir was sleeping, whence was heard great snoring. The woman said to her husband that he should make a bold assault, "and then flee away quickly, for thou canst not endure what he may

do or cry out if he may contrive to put hands on thee." She took the harp and hurried away with it.

The karl went in where Heimir was sleeping. He struck at him and gave him a deep wound, and the axe was loosened from his grasp. Then he ran away as fast as he might. Heimir awoke with the hurt, which was his death-blow, and it is said that his agony caused such a din that the posts of the house were riven asunder, and it crashed down from above, and there was a mighty earthquake; and that was the end of his life.

The man now went to his wife and told her that he had slain him, "and yet for a time I did not know how it would end; he was a wondrous strong man, but I think that he is now in Hel."

"Have thanks for the deed," said she. "I suspect that we have got us an abundance of treasure, and we shall now see if I have not spoken the truth." They brought up the fire then, and the woman took the harp and tried to open it, but she must needs break it apart, for she had not sufficient skill. Thus she opened it up, and within she saw a girl-child unlike any she had ever seen before, and there was likewise great treasure in the harp. The karl said,

"It will go with us as with many folk, for it is an ill thing to deceive the man who trusts you. It ap-

pears that a helpless child has fallen into our hands." She answered,

"This has not turned out as I supposed, but we shall not blame each other for that."

They asked the child of what race she was sprung, but she answered never a word, as if she had not learned to speak.

"It is as I warned thee," said the karl, "our deed has turned out ill. We have done a great wrong. How shall we name this child?"

"That is easily decided," said she. "She shall be called Kraka after my mother." The karl said,

"How shall we provide for her?" She answered,

"I know what is best to do: we shall say she is our daughter, and so rear her here with us."

"That will not be believed," said he. "The child is far better-favored than we; we two are lacking in fairness, and it will not seem likely that we could have had such a child, wondrously ugly as we are." She said,

"Thou dost not know: perhaps I have a cunning device by which that may appear not unlikely. I shall shave off her hair and then rub on tar and other things that will keep it from growing again; she shall wear a long hood, but no fair clothes; and thus she will be made to look like us. It may also be that

men will suppose I was very fair when I was young. She shall have the hardest work to do."

The man and his wife thought she could not talk because she never answered them. Now everything was done as the woman had planned, and the child grew up there in great poverty.

CHAPTER II

HERRAUD was the name of a rich and mighty jarl in Gautland; he was married and had a daughter named Thora. She was fairest of women, and most courteous in all accomplishments that it is better to have than to lack. She was called by the surname Borghart, because she surpassed all other women in beauty as the hart does other beasts. The Jarl loved his daughter dearly; he had a bower built for her not far from the royal hall, with a fence of wooden stakes about it. He made it his custom to send something to his daughter for her entertainment every day, and he said that he would maintain this custom of his always. It is told that one day he sent her a little snake, very fair to behold, and the worm seemed very comely to her; she put it in her chest and gave it gold to lie on.

Soon after the snake was put there it began to wax great, and the gold under it likewise increased. So it came about that the creature no longer had room within the chest, but lay encircling it without. And after that there was not room enough in the bower, but it lay about the house outside, so that its head and tail touched; at the same time it grew very ugly to deal with and none dared to enter the house for fear of the snake, save only the man who brought it food; and by now it took an ox for each meal.

The Jarl suffered great injury from this, and he swore an oath that he would give his daughter to any man who would kill the snake, whosoever he were, "and he shall also have the gold that is beneath it as her dowry."

These tidings were told far and near, but no one dared to master the great dragon.

CHAPTER III

IN that time Sigurd Hring ruled over Denmark; he was a mighty king and far-famed because of the battle he fought with Harald Hilditann at Bravell, for Harald fell before him, as is known in

the whole northern part of the world. Sigurd had a son named Ragnar, who was a large man, fair of countenance and keen in wit, great-hearted towards his men but grim to his foes. When he was old enough, he gathered troops and ships of war and became so great a warrior that his like was hard to find. He heard what Jarl Herraud had promised, but he gave it no attention and acted as if he did not know of it.

He had clothes made for himself of a wondrous sort; they were shaggy breeches and a shaggy fur cape, and when they were ready he had them boiled in pitch. After that he put them aside and kept them.

One summer he led his men to Gautland, and they lay in a hidden creek not far from the abode of the Jarl. When Ragnar had been there one night he awoke early the next morning, arose, and put on the raiment that has been told of before; he took his spear in his hand, left the ship alone, and went out where there was sand. Here he rolled about in the sand. Before he went away he took the nail from the shaft of his spear; then he fared away from the ships until he reached the gate of the Jarl's dwelling early in the day, while all men were still sleeping. He walked to the bower, and when he entered within the wooden fence where the dragon was, he

struck at it with his spear, but straightway pulled his weapon back again. Again he struck; at this thrust the spear hit the dragon's back. The snake twisted about so quickly that the point was loosened from the shaft, and so great was the din of the monster's death-agony that the whole bower shook.

Then Ragnar turned to depart. A jet of the dragon's blood struck him between the shoulders, but it did him no scathe, so well did the clothes protect him that he had made beforehand. The folk who were in the bower were awakened by the great noise, and they came outdoors. Thora saw a mighty man going away; she asked him what name he was called by and whom he was seeking. He paused on his way and spoke this verse:

"In my fifteenth year, O shining maid
I risked my life and slew this drake;
What ills may befall, I shall not die
From the stroke of the coiled and twisted snake."

Then he went away and said no more to her. The spear remained in the wound it had caused, but he carried the shaft with him. Now when she had heard his stave, she understood what he had said about his age and his errand thither, and she began

to ponder who he was; she was unsure whether he was a human being or not, for his stature seemed to her so great for his age that it rather befitted what was told of the race of monsters.

She went into her bower again and slept, and when folk appeared in the morning they saw that the dragon was dead, laid low by a great spear that still remained fast in the wound. The Jarl had it taken away, but it was so huge that most men found it unmanageable. Now the Jarl recalled what he had said concerning the man who might slay the dragon, but he did not know whether a human being had done it or not. He took counsel of his friends and his daughter to know how he might search for him, and it appeared likely to them that the man would himself look after the gaining of the reward that he had earned. His daughter advised him to call together many men to a Thing, "and bid all who would not bring upon themselves the anger of the Jarl to come thither if in any wise they may; and if any of them avows the slaying of the dragon, he is to bring with him the shaft that fits the spear."

That seemed a hopeful rede to the Jarl, and he bade summon a Thing. When the appointed day arrived, he was there with many other chiefs, and there was a great throng of men gathered together.

CHAPTER IV

IT was told on board Ragnar's ships that a Thing had been called, and he went ashore to it with nearly all his men. When they had arrived they posted themselves somewhat apart from the others, for Ragnar saw that a greater number of men had come than was customary. Then the Jarl arose, asked for silence, and spoke: he thanked those who had so well responded to his message, and then he told them what had befallen. First he recounted what he had promised to the man who would slay the dragon, and then he said,

"The snake is now dead, and the man who wrought that mighty deed has left his spear in the wound. If any of those here come to the Thing has the shaft belonging to that spear, let him show it, and thus make good his claim; I shall then fulfill all I have said, whether he be of lowly or high degree." And at the end of his speech he had the spear carried about before each man in the Thing, and he asked whatsoever man it was that avowed the deed and had wrought it, to tell him thereof. And so it

was done; but none was found who had the spear.

Now they came to the place where Ragnar was and showed him the spear; he said that he had the shaft of it, and the two fitted together entire. From this men knew that he must have been the slayer of the dragon, and from that deed he grew widely famed throughout the northern lands.

Ragnar now asked for Thora the Jarl's daughter in marriage; her father was agreed thereto, and a great feast was prepared with the best cheer that was to be had in the realm. At this feast Ragnar wedded Thora, and when it was done he returned to his kingdom with his wife, whom he dearly loved. They had two sons: the elder was called Eric and the younger Agnar, and both of them were large of stature and fair of countenance. They were stronger than most other men who lived in their time, and they were skilled in all sorts of crafts.

On a time it came to pass that Thora fell ill, and of that sickness she died. This seemed so great a grief to Ragnar that he would no longer rule his kingdom, and he took others to govern it for him with his sons. He now returned to his former deeds; he departed to the wars, and wherever he went he was victorious.

CHAPTER V

ONE summer he sailed to Norway, for he had many kinsmen and friends there whom he wished to see. Towards evening he and his ships sailed into a little haven, not far from a farmstead called Spangarheath; and they lay in the haven overnight. When morning came the kitchen knaves went ashore to bake bread; they saw the farmhouse not far away, and they thought it would be better for them to go thither to do it. And when they came to the little house they found someone to speak with; it was a woman, and they asked her if she were the housewife, and what was her name.

"I am indeed the housewife here," said she, "and my name is a rare one; I am called Grima. Whence come ye?"

They said that they were vassals of Ragnar Lodbrok, and that they wished to go ahead with their task, "and we want thee to work with us."

The woman said that her hands were grown stiff with age; "but of old I could do my work well enough! Yet I have a daughter who can busy herself with you; her name is Kraka and she will soon be home. It has come to pass of late that I can scarcely control her."

At this time Kraka was gone out with the cattle in the morning and she saw that a great and mighty ship had come ashore. Thereupon she washed herself. Grima had forbidden her to do that, for she did not wish men to see Kraka's beauty; the maiden was fairest of all women, and her hair was so long that it reached to the earth about her, and was lovely as the fairest silk.

Now Kraka came home. The kitchen knaves had made a fire, and so she saw that men had arrived there whom she had never seen before. She looked at them and they likewise at her, and then they asked Grima,

"Is this fair maid thy daughter?"

"It is no untruth," said Grima, "that she is my daughter."

"Wonderfully unlike are ye two, thou being so ugly," said they; "but we have never seen so fair a maid, and in no way can we see that she has thy looks, for thou art a very monster!" Grima answered,

"The likeness is not to be perceived now, for my looks have changed from their former state."

Then they said they would have her work with them. "What work shall I do?" she asked. They said they wished her to lay out the dough, and they would bake it afterwards. She went about her task and did

it very well, but they gazed upon her so much that they neglected their work and burnt the bread. When they had finished the task they went to the ships; and when they were supposed to serve the food, everyone said that they had never done their work so badly, and that they deserved to be punished for it.

Now Ragnar asked them why their cooking had gone so ill. They said they had seen a woman so very fair that they could not attend to their task for looking at her, and it was their opinion that no one in the world could be more beautiful than she. While they were making so much of her beauty, Ragnar spoke and said he was assured she could not be as fair as Thora had been, but they said she was no less fair. Then Ragnar said,

"I must send some men who are able to see precisely, and if it is as ye say, your lack of attention shall be forgiven; but if the woman is in any wise less beautiful than ye say, ye must needs suffer a harsh punishment."

Thereupon he sent his men to meet this fair maid, but the wind was so strong against them that they might not set out that day. Ragnar said to his messengers,

"If the young maid seems as fair to you as was said to us, bid her come to me and I will meet her;

it is my wish that she be mine. She shall be neither naked nor clad, and neither fasting nor fed; she shall not come alone, yet no man shall attend her."

Now they went until they came to the house, and there they gazed closely on her; and she seemed so fair to them that they thought none other could be her like. Thereupon they gave her the message of their lord Ragnar, and told her how she was to prepare herself. Kraka gave thought to the words of the King, and the manner of her preparation to meet him; but to Grima it seemed impossible, and she said she was sure the King must be lacking his wits. Kraka said,

"He must have spoken so because the thing can be done, if we may but perceive his intent. But certain it is that I may not fare with you this day, but I shall come out to your ships early in the morning."

Then they went away and told Ragnar how matters stood, and that she would come to them in the morning. That night she abode at home; but early in the morning Kraka told the old man that she must needs go to Ragnar, "but I must change my raiment somewhat. Thou hast a trout-net, and in that I must wrap myself, and over that I shall let my hair fall down, so that I shall be no whit naked. And I shall taste of a leek; that is but little food, and yet it will

bear witness that I have eaten; I shall have thy hound follow me, so that I shall not go alone, and yet no man will be with me." When the old man heard of her intent, he thought she had great store of wisdom.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN Kraka was ready she went her way until she came to the ship, and very fair she was to look upon, for her hair was bright as gold. Ragnar called out to her and asked who she was and whom she was seeking. She answered and spoke a stave:

"I dared not do else than obey thy behest,
Prince Ragnar, and come as I'm bid:
Although I'm companioned, alone I fare;
Though naked, my body is hid."

Then he sent men out to meet her and conduct her to the ship, but she would not go with them unless he assured her safety and that of her companion. She was then led to the King's ship; and when she came into the fore-room, he stretched out his hand to her, but the hound bit it. His men ran up and slew the hound and stretched a bow-string about its neck so that it had its bane thereof: no better than that did they respect the safety promised her.

Now Ragnar placed her beside him on the after-deck and talked with her; he found great delight in her, and showed himself merry towards her. He spoke a verse:

"If this gentle maid gave me honor due,
The clasp of her arms she'd deny me not."

She said:

"If the prince will uphold the word he gave
He will let me depart and go without spot."

Now he told her that he found great pleasure in her, and it was his sure intent that she should depart with him. She said that it might not be, but he said his will was that she tarry aboard the ship that night. She said that would not come to pass before he returned from the journey he had before him, "and it may be that thy mind may be changed by then." Then Ragnar called his treasurer to him and bade him fetch the shift, all sewn with gold, that had been Thora's, and bring it to him. This Ragnar offered to Kraka in the following wise:

"Wilt thou take this shift that Thora owned?
Fitting for thee is that silver-wrought gear;
White were her hands that worked the cloth—
Until her death to me she was dear."

Kraka said in reply:

"I dare not take the silver-wrought shift,
More fitting for me is wretched gear;
In coal-black rags I've driven my goats
Down stony ways by the shores of the sea,
And for that I am known as Kraka here.

And I will surely not take the shift," said she. "I will not deck myself in finery so long as I am with the karl man. It may be that thou wilt think better of me when I adorn myself in more comely wise; but now I will go home. But thou shalt send men after me if thou still hast the same desire that I fare with thee." Ragnar said that his intent would not change; and therewith she went home.

Ragnar and his men went on as they had planned, as soon as they had a favorable wind, and he concluded his errand as he had intended. When he was returning he entered the harbor where he had been before when Kraka came to him. And that same evening he sent men to her with his word that she should depart with him forever. But she told them she would not leave before the morning.

Kraka arose early next day and went to the bed of the karl and his wife, and asked them if they were awake. They said they were, and asked her what she willed. She told them that she intended to leave, and

abide there no longer, "but I know that ye killed my foster-father Heimir, and there are none who deserve worse of me, than ye do. Yet I will not have evil done you, because I have long been with you; but now I will speak the wish that every day that passes over you shall be worse than the one before, and the last worst of all; and now we must part."

Then she went her way until she came to the ships, and there she was well received. They had a fair wind. That same evening, when the men were about the making of their beds, Ragnar said he wished that he and Kraka should sleep together. She said it might not be so, "and it is my wish that thou first hold marriage with me when thou comest to thy kingdom; methinks that befits my honor and thine, and the honor of our heirs, if we have any." He granted her her prayer, and they had a good journey thence.

After that Ragnar came home to his country, and a rich feast was made ready for him, at which men drank to his return and to his marriage at the same time. And the first night the two of them went into one bed together, Ragnar wished to have to do with his wife, but she asked to be let off, for she said that ill would befall afterwards if she did not have her way. Ragnar said he did not believe that, and said that

the karl and his wife were not foresighted. He asked how long it would be so. She said,

"Three nights together, but yet apart
Shall we bide, nor worship the gods as yet;
From my son this would save a lasting harm,
For boneless is he thou wouldst now beget."

But although she said this, Ragnar paid no attention to it; he accomplished his will none the less.

CHAPTER VII

NOW time passed by, and in their marriage was much love and good-will. Kraka knew herself to be with child; she was delivered and gave birth to a boy who was sprinkled with water and named Ivar. But the boy was boneless; he had only the like of gristle where bones should have been. But while he was young his growth was so great that none was his equal. He was fairest of all men in looks and so wise that none other is known to have been wiser than he.

Ragnar and Kraka had other children. Their second son was called Bjorn, the third Hvitserk, and the fourth Rognvald. They were all bold and mighty men, and as soon as they might they learned all kinds

of accomplishments. And wherever they went, Ivar had himself carried along by means of staves, since he could not walk; and it was his place to give counsel to them in whatsoever they undertook.

At this time the sons of Ragnar, Eric and Agnar, were likewise mighty men, so that their equals could scarce be found; they went abroad in ships of war every summer, and were widely famed for their harryings.

Now it came to pass one day that Ivar spoke with his brothers, and asked them how long they thought to continue sitting at home instead of gaining glory for themselves. They said they would follow his advice in this as in other things. "It is my wish," said Ivar, "that we ask to have a ship and men, well ordered, and after that I desire that we earn wealth and fame for ourselves, if it may be done." And when they had agreed this among themselves, they told Ragnar that they wished to have of him a ship and a band of men who were tried in the taking of booty, and ready for all things. Ragnar did according to their request, and when the host was ready, they departed from the land.

Wherever they battled with other men, they were ever the winners, and they gained themselves many followers and much treasure. Then Ivar said he

wished that they would betake themselves where there was a more mighty force to be met, and thus make trial of their hardihood. They asked him where he knew of such a thing, and he told them of a stead called Whitby where men had been wont to make sacrifices, "and many have tried to win it, but none has been victorious," said he. Ragnar had come there and he had had to depart without achieving his purpose. "Is the host so great and so valiant," said they, "or are there other difficulties?" Ivar said that there was a great number of men there and likewise the place was a mighty temple; it had been the destruction of all who attacked it and none had endured against it. Thereupon they said that he should decide whether they should betake themselves thither or not. He said he would like to try by venture which might be the more potent, their valor or the idolatry of the folk of that country.

CHAPTER VIII

THEY now took their way thither, and when they came to the land they made ready to go ashore. It seemed necessary for the band to keep watch over some of the ships; and since their brother Rognvald

was so young that they thought he was not yet able to enter into so great a test of valor as they expected, they left him to guard the ships with some of the men. But before they departed from the ships, Ivar said that the men in the stronghold had two cows, and all folk had fled away from them because they could not bear the roaring and the trolldom of the beasts. Ivar said moreover,

"Bear yourselves as best ye can, though ye should feel some terror, for ye will not come to harm."

Then they drew up their men in battle array, and when they approached the burg, those who dwelt within grew ware of them. They straightway let loose their cattle, in which they believed, and when the beasts were free, they rushed out fiercely and roared aloud. Ivar saw this from the shield on which they bore him, and he bade them fetch him a bow, and it was done. He shot at these evil creatures so that both got their bane of it, and thus was ended the fight that men had most feared.

At the ships Rognvald spoke to his men and said that those who could entertain themselves like his brothers were happy indeed, "and they had no other reason for bidding me stay behind than that they wished to have the glory of it alone. But now we shall all go ashore."

They did so, and when they came up to the host, Rognvald threw himself hard into the battle, and the end of it was that he fell. But his brothers entered into the burg, and the battle began anew. Finally the men of the stronghold took to flight, but the brothers pursued them. And when they returned to the burg, Bjorn spoke a stave:

"By Gnipefjord was our war-cry heard,
Our swords smote better than those of the foe,
Each slew his man by Whitby stead:
Let every swain wield his weapons so!"

When they returned to the burg they took all the chattels and burnt every house within the stronghold, and broke down all its walls. And then they departed thence in their ships.

CHAPTER IX

EYSTEIN was the name of a king who ruled over Sweden; he was married and had a daughter called Ingeborg. She was fairest of all women and loveliest to look on. King Eystein was rich and had many followers; he was ill-natured, but wise. He had his royal residence at Uppsala. He was a great wor-

shipper of the gods and in those days there were more sacrifices made in Uppsala than any place else in the Northlands.

The folk there had great faith in a certain cow which they called Sibilia; she had been so much worshipped with sacrifices that men could not endure the noise she made. Therefore, when an army of foes was expected, the King was wont to have this cow go before the host, and so great was the devil's power attending her that his enemies grew mad when they heard her, and fought one another, taking no care of themselves. For this reason Sweden was unharried by war, since men had not the heart to be matched against so mighty a power.

Many princes and men were King Eystein's friends, and it is said that at that time there was also great friendship between him and Ragnar. It was their custom that every summer they visited each other, turn about; and now it came to pass that Ragnar was to be entertained by King Eystein. When he came to Uppsala, he and his men were well received. At the banquet the first evening the King had his daughter pour out the wine for himself and Ragnar; and Ragnar's men said among themselves that he would surely ask for the King's daughter, if only he no longer had the karl's daughter by him. One of his men under-

took to point this out to him, and the end of it was that the maid was promised to him, but she was to remain betrothed to him for a long time.

When the feast was done, Ragnar went home, and he had a fair journey. Nought further is said of it until he was but a short distance from the burg, and his path lay through a certain forest. They came to a clearing in the wood, and here Ragnar had his men halt and give ear to him; and he asked all those who had been with him on the journey to Sweden to have a care that none of them said aught about his intent concerning the marriage that was arranged with the daughter of King Eystein. So heavy was the penalty he imposed that if any of them spoke of it, he was to lose no less than his life for it. And when he had told them his will he went home to his estate; and his men were rejoiced at his return, and drank a welcome to him.

He had not been sitting long on his throne before Kraka came into the hall before him; she sat upon his knee and put her arms about his neck and asked him what tidings there were, but he said he knew of none to tell her. When the evening drew on men took to drinking and after that they went to sleep. When Ragnar and Kraka came to their bed she asked him

again for tidings, but again he said he knew of none. She wished to speak with him about many things, but he said he was sleepy and tired from his journey.

"Now I shall tell thee tidings," said she, "if thou wilt give me none." He asked what they were. "I call it news," she said, "if a woman is betrothed to a king when it is none the less said by certain folk that he already has another wife."

"Who told thee that?" said Ragnar.

"Thy men shall keep safe their lives and limbs, for it was none of them that told me," she answered. "Thou must have seen that three birds sat in the tree beside thee, and they told me these tidings. I must ask thee now not to carry out this marriage as it has been planned. I have to tell thee now that I am the daughter of a king and not at all of a karl; and my father was so glorious a man that his like could not be found; my mother was fairest and wisest of women, and her name will last while the world endures."

Then he asked her who her father was, and if she was not the daughter of the poor man of Spangarheath. She said she was the daughter of Sigurd Fafnir's Bane and Brynhild, Budli's daughter.

"That seems most unlikely to me," he replied, "that the daughter of those two should be called Kraka,

and grow up in such poverty on Spangarheath."

"Thus is the tale," she said; and then she told him of the meeting of Sigurd and Brynhild on the rock, and of her begetting; "and when Brynhild was delivered a name was given to me and I was called Aslaug." And then she told how she had fared from the time when she and Heimir met the karl. Ragnar answered,

"I am greatly astounded at these mad fancies about Aslaug that thou tellest me of." She answered,

"Thou knowest that I am going now with child, and it will surely be a boy that I bear. Upon the child will be such a mark that it will seem that a snake lies about his eye. And if it comes to pass as I have said I ask thee not to go to Sweden at the time thou shouldst receive the daughter of King Eystein; but if it proves false, do thou in this matter as thou wilt. But I desire that the boy be named after my father if that sign of great fame be upon him, as I expect."

Now when her hour was come she gave birth to a boy-child and the serving women took it and showed it to her. She bade them carry it and show it to Ragnar; and it was so done; the lad was borne into the hall and laid in the lap of Ragnar's cloak. When he looked on the boy, they asked him what he should be called, and Ragnar spoke a stave:

"Battle-bold, brave as his mother's sire,
Sigurd shall be the name of the swain;
The snake-eyed hero, the feeder of eagles,
Mightiest offspring of Odin's strain."

Then he took a ring from his finger and gave it to the boy as his name-gift, but as he stretched out his hand with the ring the child turned so that it touched its back, and Ragnar read that to mean that he despised the ring. Again he spoke a stave:

"Bright are the eyes and true the heart
Of Brynhild's daughter's child;
Budli's offspring will win great battles,
By glittering gold he is not beguiled."

And again:

"A snake like this I have never seen,
Save in Sigurd's eyes alone;
The bold-hearted boy has the worm in his eye;
By this token he may be known."

Then he told them to bear the child out into the woman's bower. But therewith there was an end of his journeying to Sweden.

Now the race of Aslaug was made known, and all men were aware that she was the daughter of Sigurd Fafnir's Bane and Brynhild.

CHAPTER X

NOW when the appointed time had passed for Ragnar to go to the feast in Uppsala, and he came not, it seemed to King Eystein that a great shame had been done to him and his daughter, and that was the end of the friendship between the two kings. When Eric and Agnar, the sons of Ragnar, heard of this, they took counsel among themselves and decided that they would gather as many men as they could and go harrying in Sweden. So they summoned a great number of followers, and it seemed a matter of great importance to them that everything should go well when the ship was launched.

But it happened that when Agnar's ship was shot off the rollers a man was standing before it, who thus received his bane; and that they called a "reddening of rollers." Now it appeared to them that things had not begun according to their wish, but they would not let it stand in the way of their journey. When their band was ready they departed for Sweden, and as soon as they reached it, they harried the length and breadth of King Eystein's realm. But the folk grew ware of them and went to Uppsala to tell King Eystein that a host of foes had come into the land.

The King sent a summons throughout his realm and thus he gathered together a wondrous great host. He moved them into a wood, and there he pitched camp; he had with him the cow Sibilia, and they had made many sacrifices to her, before she would journey with them. While they were in the wood, King Eystein said,

"I have heard that the sons of Ragnar are in the field before this wood, and it has been truthfully reported to me that they do not have the third part of our host. Now we shall draw up our men in this wise for battle: one third of our army shall attack them first, and they are so bold that it will seem to them that they have us in their power; but thereafter we shall come at them with all our strength, with the cow in the lead, and I think that they will be unable to hold their ground before the noise of the beast."

They did as he said; and when the brothers saw King Eystein's band, they thought they had to do with numbers no greater than their own, for they did not suspect that there might be a larger host. After that the whole army came out of the wood and the cow was set free; she ran before the King's men and roared terribly, and so great was the din she made before the warriors who could hear her that they fought among themselves, all save the two

brothers. But the evil creature slew many a man that day; and although the sons of Ragnar were mighty warriors, they could not resist both trolldom and an army that outnumbered them; yet they made fierce resistance and defended themselves manfully and gloriously. Eric and Agnar were in the front line of combat that day, and many times they charged through the ranks of King Eystein's men.

Then Agnar fell. Eric saw this, and thereafter he fought most bravely, caring not whether he could get away or not. At the last he was overpowered by numbers and captured. Eystein bade him cease fighting, and he offered him peace, "and in addition," said he, "I will marry my daughter to thee." Then Eric spoke a stave:

"Eystein has slain my brother; I will
Neither peace therefor nor a maiden buy;
My mother will weep not; last of my men,
Upon these spear-points let me die!"

Then he said that the men who had followed him and his brother should be allowed to depart in peace whither they willed, "but I wish that ye take as many spears as may be and thrust them down on the field; I would have myself lifted up on them and there leave my life."

King Eystein said they should do as he bade, though he had chosen the thing that worst suited both of them. So the spears were set up, and Eric spoke a verse:

"No king's son shall, so far as I know,
On a dearer bolster choose to die;
The black-hued ravens shall tear our flesh
And over our bodies raise their cry."

Then he went up to the spears; he took a ring from his hand and cast it to his followers, who had been given truce; he sent them to Aslaug, and spoke this stave:

"These words to Aslaug: my raid is done;
To that slender dame my goods I bequeath;
Let my stepmother tell her valiant sons
When men report the tale of my death."

After that he was lifted up on the spears. Then he saw a raven flying by, and again he spoke:

"The raven desires to feast on my eyes,
He screams high over my head;
Ill he rewards the feasts I've made
On which he formerly fed."

Thereafter he gave up his life most valiantly.

His messengers journeyed home, and they delayed not before they came to the place where Ragnar abode. At that time he was gone to a meeting of kings, and his other sons were not returned from their raid. The men were there three nights before they approached Aslaug's seat; they saluted her fittingly, and she took their greeting well. She had a linen cloth over her knees and her hair was loosened, for she was about to comb it. She asked them who they were, since she had never seen them before. He who was their spokesman said that they had been followers of Eric and Agnar, Ragnar's sons. Then she spoke a stave:

"What news of your land, O royal thanes?
And where are the Swedes? I've heard
That the Danes fared north and their rollers were red,
But I have learnt no further word."

He spoke a verse in reply:

"My news is the death of Thora's sons
(To Ragnar the fates are cruel and fell);
Over their bodies the eagle flew
(Bitter the tidings I tell)."

Then she asked how it came to pass; and he spoke for her the verse that Eric had uttered when he sent

her the ring. They saw her shed tears, but they were like blood to look on, and hard as hail-stones. No man ever saw her shed another tear, either before or after. She said she could do nothing about the matter of revenge before either Ragnar or his sons came home, "but ye shall tarry here until then, and I shall spare not to urge revenge, even as if they were my own sons," said she. So the men remained there.

It so happened that Ivar and his brothers returned home before Ragnar, and they had not been there long before Aslaug went to see them. Sigurd was at that time three years old, and he went along with his mother. When she came into the brothers' hall they greeted her well, and each asked the other for tidings; and they told her of the fall of her son Rognvald, and the things that had come to pass at that time; but that meant but little to her, and she said,

"My sons are no beggars; they have left me to stare
Over the sea with my longing, alone;
Youngest was Rognvald; with blood-dyed shield
From the combat Odin has called him home.

"I do not see," she said, "that he could have lived for greater glory." They asked her what tidings she had to tell, and she answered, "The fall of your brothers Eric and Agnar, my stepsons, who were

according to my thinking the best of warriors. It is no wonder if ye suffer it not, but take grim revenge for it. This I ask of you, and I shall in all ways help you, that the revenge may be passing great." Ivar said,

"Certain it is that I shall never go to Sweden to fight against King Eystein and the trolldom that is with him." She pressed hard upon them, but Ivar spoke for them and quite refused to make that journey. And now she spoke a stave:

"Unavenged yourselves would not lie
If ye by chance were the first ones dead;
No sons of mine were Eric and Agnar—
Yet I wish they lived in your stead."

"It is not sure," said Ivar, "whether it would be of any avail, though thou shouldst speak one stanza after another; but how much dost thou know of the obstacles in the way?"

"I do not certainly know," she said; "but what canst thou tell me of the difficulty?"

Ivar said there was so mighty a cult there that he had never heard tell of its like; "and the King himself is both rich and ill-natured."

"What is the thing he trusts most in making his sacrifices?"

"It is a cow," said he, "that is called Sibilia. So

potent are her spells that as soon as men hear her, the King's foes are unable to hold their ground. And it is scarce as if the battle were to be fought with men alone; rather it appears that his enemies must encounter trolldom before they meet the King. I will not take the risk thereof upon myself or my men." She said,

"Thou must remember this: thou canst not be called a surpassing great man and yet do nought to deserve it." And now that she thought there was no more hope for her, she started to go, for she thought that they valued her words but lightly. Then said Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye,

"I would tell thee, mother, what is in my mind, though I may not prevail over their oaths."

"Let me hear it," said she. Then he spoke a verse:

"In three nights' space shall the levy be made,
If that wish, mother, is grieving thee;
In Uppsala Eystein shall rule no more
(If our swords prevail), though he offer us fee."

When he had spoken the stave, the brothers had somewhat changed their minds. Aslaug said,

"Thou dost proclaim right clearly, my son, that thou wouldst do my will; and yet I do not see how we may bring it to pass without the support of thy

brothers. But it may come to pass, and it would best please me that this thing may be avenged, and methinks thou hast borne thee very well, my son." And now Bjorn spoke a stave:

"Though a man say little, the heart in his breast
May still be bold and still beat high;
I have not forgot thy stepsons' deaths
Although I have no snake in my eye!"

And now Hvitserk spoke:

"Let us first take thought before we swear
Revenge on the man who was Agnar's bane;
We must cut the prows of our ships from the ice,
Make them ready, and launch them again."

Hvitserk spoke of cutting the ice because there was a great frost at the time, and their ships were frozen fast. Then Ivar said it had come to such a point that he also must have some part in the affair, and he spoke a stave:

"Ye two have boldness and valor enough,
Ye will have need of endurance too;
Ye shall bear me before you; though handless I am,
I shall share this revenge with you.

"And the first thing is," said Ivar, "that we take as great pains as we can with the fitting out of our ships

and gathering of men, for we shall need to be unsparing of these if we are to win."

Then Aslaug departed.

CHAPTER XI

SIGURD had a foster-father who undertook to gather men and prepare ships in his behalf, until all things were in readiness. And so quickly was it done that the band of men whom Sigurd was to have gathered was ready after three nights had passed; and he also had five ships, all well appointed.

When five nights were passed, Hvitserk and Bjorn had prepared fourteen ships, but Ivar alone had ten, and Aslaug ten more, within seven nights of the time when they took counsel and promised to make the trip. Then they met together, and each of them told the other how many he had gathered. Ivar said that he had sent a band of knights by land. Aslaug replied,

"If I knew that a band of men might proceed by land, I might have sent out a large one as well."

"We shall not delay over that," said Ivar. "We shall go on with the men we have already gathered."

Now Aslaug told them that she would go with

them, "and I shall know most surely what pains are taken to avenge the brothers," said she.

"It is a sure thing," said Ivar, "that thou shalt not come aboard our ships; but if thou wilt, thou mayest lead the men who march by land." She said it should be so; and therewith her name was changed and she was called Randalin.

Now both bands departed, and Ivar told them beforehand where they should meet. Both of them fared well, and they came together again as they had agreed. Wherever they went in the kingdom of King Eystein they harried and raided: they burnt down all they could find, and slew every mother's child, and moreover killed all living things in their path.

CHAPTER XII

IT chanced that certain men escaped and reached King Eystein, and they told him that a great army had entered his realm, so ill to deal with that it left nought undone, but laid waste all the land it passed over, so that no house remained standing. When King Eystein heard these tidings he thought he knew who these vikings were. He sent a message throughout his entire kingdom and summoned all of

his followers who wished to give him aid and could bear shield. "We shall have the cow Sibilia with us, that is our god," said he, "and let her charge before the host; and methinks it will go once again as it has before, and they will not be able to endure her roaring. I will spur on my men to do their best; and let us drive away this evil host."

So it was done, and Sibilia was let loose. Ivar beheld her attack, and heard the terrible noise that came from her; he bade all his men to make such a mighty din with their weapons and war-cries that they could scarce hear the voice of this ill creature that charged against them. He told his carriers to bear him as far forward as they might, "and when that cow comes towards us, cast me at her; either I shall lose my own life or she shall have her bane of me. Ye shall now take a large tree and cut a bow from it, and likewise arrows."

Thereafter they brought him the mighty bow and the great arrows that he had bidden them make. They did not seem usable to any of the others. Then Ivar urged each man to do his best; the band went forward with great violence and din, and Ivar was borne at their head. But now there arose so loud a noise when Sibilia bellowed, that they heard it quite as clearly as if they were standing silent and at rest. This so worked

on them that the whole army was bent on fighting one another, save only the brothers. While this marvel befell, the men who carried Ivar saw him draw his bow as if it were only a weak elm-twig, and it seemed to them therewith that he drew even the point of his arrow back of the bow. Then they heard the bow-string shriek louder than aught they had heard before. And they saw his arrows fly as quickly as if he had shot them from the strongest cross-bow, and so straight that each struck Sibilia in the eye. She fell, but after that she went on head foremost; and now her rage was much worse than before. As she charged at them, Ivar bade them cast him towards her, and he was so light that it seemed to them they were throwing a little child, for they were not over-near the cow when they cast him.

He landed on the back of Sibilia, and at once he became so heavy that it was as if a boulder had fallen on her, and every bone in her was broken, and thereof she died.

Then he bade his men to lift him up as quickly as might be, and this they did. Now his voice was so clear that all of the army thought he was within very short space of them, though they were in truth at a distance; and they gave the best of attention to his discourse. At the close of his speech he said that all

the fighting they had done was now taken from them, and it was no harm that the host had fought among themselves for a short time. He urged them to wreak as much injury on the foe as they might, "and methinks the most furious of them is disposed of, since the cow is slain."

Now both sides had their men drawn up and they joined in a battle so fierce that the Swedes said they had never been so sorely tested. The two brothers Hvitserk and Bjorn pressed forward so boldly that no army could stand before them. So many of King Eystein's host fell that but a small part were left standing, but some of them took to flight. The end of the battle was that King Eystein was slain, and the brothers were victorious. They granted peace to those who were left. Then Ivar said that he did not desire to wage war longer in the land, for it was now without a king, "I wish rather that we proceed until we find greater strength opposed to us."

But Randalin went home with some part of the host.

CHAPTER XIII

NOW they agreed among themselves that they should go warring in the south; and Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye went with his brothers on every raid

thereafter. In this one they laid siege to every great burg they came upon, and not one withstood them.

They heard of a certain castle that was large, well-manned and stoutly built, and Ivar said he would hold his course thither. The name of the burg is told, and likewise he who ruled it: the prince was called Vifil, and his castle was named Vifilsburg from him. The brothers now harried the country and laid waste all the castles that they encountered before they came to Vifilsburg. The prince was at that time absent from his castle, and many of his men with him. Now they set up their tents on the plain that was before the burg, and on the day of their arrival they remained quiet, and spoke with the men within the stronghold. They asked whether they would sooner give up the fortress and therewith receive peace for all those within; or test their hardihood and strength, and receive quarter for none of their men.

They quickly made answer, saying that the burg would never be so far overcome that they would have to give it up, "and it will fall on you first to prove yourselves and show us your valor and bravery."

So the night passed, and on the day following they tried to capture the burg, but they could not accomplish it. They sat before the castle a half month, and every day they sought to take it, by various devices;

but they came no nearer to taking it after they had tried a long time, and so they decided to depart. When the folk in the castle saw that they intended to leave, they came out on the walls and spread out costly stuffs on the rampart, and all the most precious cloths that could be found in the burg, and laid before them the greatest treasure in gold and jewels that they had. Then one of them spoke and said,

"We thought that these men, the sons of Ragnar and their followers, were bold fighters, but we must say that they came no nearer their goal than any of the others."

After that they raised their war-cry at them and struck upon their shields and egged them on as much as they could. When Ivar heard that he was so startled that he fell into a sore illness, so that he could not move; and they had to wait until he should either mend or have his bane of it. He lay that whole day until evening, and spoke no word. Then he told the men who were with him that they should bid Bjorn, Hvitserk and Sigurd come and speak with him, together with all the wisest men in the host. When all the greatest chieftains were gathered in one place, Ivar asked them if they had bethought themselves of any plan by which they were more likely to gain the victory than those they had tried before. But

they all replied that they were lacking in the wit to think of a scheme that would bring them victory. "It is now as often before," said they, "it is thy counsel we need to help us." Then Ivar replied,

"There is one device has occurred to me that we have not tried. There is a great forest not far hence; and when night falls we shall leave our tents secretly; and go to it, leaving our camp still standing. When we reach the forest, let each man tie up a load of wood, and after that we shall proceed against the burg from all sides and set fire to the wood; from that a great blaze will be made, which will cause the walls of the burg to lose their lime, and then we can bring up the catapults, and so test how strongly built it is."

So it was done. They departed into the forest, and remained there as long as seemed best to Ivar. Then they went to the burg as he had arranged. And when they had struck fire into the great heap of wood it blazed so fiercely that the walls could not endure it, but lost their lime. Then the brothers brought up their catapults to the castle, and broke a wide gap through it, and at once there was a great battle. And when they were thus evenly matched, the men of the castle were slain, though some of them escaped by flight; and the end of it was that they slew every mother's son that was in the burg and took away all

the treasure, and they burnt the castle before they departed.

CHAPTER XIV

AFTER that they went on until they came to a burg called Luna. They had destroyed almost every burg and castle in the Southland, and they had grown so widely famed throughout the world that there was no child, however young, but knew their name. It was their intent to cease not before they came to Rome, since that burg was reported to be large and well-manned, famous and wealthy. But they did not quite know how far distant it was; and they had so great a host that they could not gain provisions for them. They remained for a time within Lunaburg and took counsel together concerning their journey.

There came to them here an ancient and friendly man. When they asked him who he was, he said he was a beggar, and had wandered up and down the country all his life.

"Then thou must have many tidings to tell us that we wish to hear." The old man answered,

"I know of no land ye might wish to ask me about that I could not tell you tidings of."

"We wish thee to tell us how far is the way from here to Rome." He answered,

"I can tell you something as a token of the distance. Ye may see these iron shoes I have on my feet, which are old; and these others on my back, which are broken. But when I departed thence I bound on my feet the ones that now hang broken on my back, and both pairs were then new; and I have been on that road ever since."

When the old man had said this it seemed to them that they could not go on the way they had planned towards Rome. So they turned away with their army and captured many castles that had never been taken before; and the tokens of this are to be seen to this very day.

CHAPTER XV

NOW it is to be said that Ragnar was sitting at home in his kingdom, and he knew not where his sons were, or his wife Randalin. He heard all men tell tales of his sons, saying that none might be compared with them, and he thought that surely none were so celebrated. He reflected how he might win fame for himself, which would be no less lasting than

theirs. He bethought him of a plan; then he summoned wrights and had them cut down trees for two large merchant ships; men saw that these were so great that their like had never been made in the Northlands. Therewith he gathered a great store of weapons out of his kingdom, and from this change folk perceived that he intended to go on a raid outside his land. This was talked about far and wide in the countries near by, and the people and all the kings who ruled there feared that they could not remain in their realms; and all of them had a watch kept in the land to see if he would attack them.

On a certain time Randalin asked Ragnar whither he intended to go. He told her he wished to go to England with no more than the two ships, and such men as could sail on them. She said,

"This trip of thine seems unwise to me: methinks it were better if thou hadst more ships, and smaller."

"It is no glory at all," said he, "to conquer a land with many ships, but there is no example of one who conquered a land like England with two ships. But if I am beaten, it is all the better that I have taken fewer ships with me." Then Randalin answered,

"It seems to me none the less expensive, by the time these ships are built, than if thou hadst many warships for thy trip. But thou knowest it is a hard thing

to sail to England in ships, and if it should chance that they are lost, thy men must be surrendered even if they reach the shore, in case the ruler of the land should come upon them. It is far better to enter harbors in ships of war than in large merchant-ships." Then Ragnar spoke a verse:

"The bravest prince needs gold for his men,
But treasure avails him less than his thanes;
The red gold rings help little in battle,
Many kings are dead whose gold remains."

He had his ships prepared and his men gathered, so that his vessels were heavily charged. There was great talk concerning his plan. He spoke another verse:

"What chatter resounds from the cliff-side, wife,
That I leave my ships, the snakes of the sea?
Nay, if the gods but will it, the deed shall be done
As I have planned it, unflinchingly!"

When the ships were ready, together with all the men who were to follow him, and the weather seemed favorable to him, Ragnar said that he would embark. When he had prepared himself, his wife accompanied him to the ships. Before he parted from his wife she said she wished to repay him for the shift that he

had once given her. He asked her in what manner that might be; and she spoke this stave:

"Gladly I give thee this gray-hued shirt
Woven of hair, without seam or hem:
Within it no blade can cut thee or wound
By the grace of the gods: it was hallowed to them."

He said he would accept this device of her. When they parted it could be easily seen that she took it much to heart.

Now Ragnar sailed to England, as he had intended. He met with a sharp wind, which wrecked both his ships on the coast of England, but all his men came ashore with their clothing and weapons, and wherever he came upon a village or burg or castle, he captured it.

The king who was then ruling in England was called Ella. He had heard of the departure of Ragnar from his own country, and had posted certain men who were to let him know if the army came into his land. These men now came to Ella and brought him tidings of war. Thereupon he sent out a summons through all his realm and bade every man come to him who could bear a shield and ride a horse, and had the courage to fight; and he gathered so great an army

that it was wonderful to see. Then Ella and his men made ready for war. He said to them,

"If we win the victory in this battle, and ye are aware that Ragnar is present, ye shall not turn your weapons against him, for he has sons who would never leave us in peace if he fell."

Ragnar also prepared himself for battle, and he had the shirt which Randalin had given him at parting in place of a byrnie, and in his hand the spear with which he slew the dragon lying about Thora's hall, as none other dared do; and he had no armor on save his helmet. When the two sides met, they fell to fighting. Ragnar had by far the smaller host, and the battle had not endured long before many of his men were slain. Wherever he went his foes grew weak before him. He charged through the ranks often that day, and wherever he laid about him or hewed upon shields, byrnies or helmets, his blows were so mighty that nothing could resist him. But howsoever they struck or shot at him, no weapon harmed him, and he received no wound, though he slew a great number of King Ella's men. Yet the end of the battle was that all of Ragnar's host fell, and he was overborne by shields and captured. Then they asked him who he was, but he remained silent and answered no whit. King Ella said,

"This man shall have a greater test of his hardihood put upon him if he will not tell us who he is. Let him be cast into a snake-pit and let him sit there a long time; but if he says aught by which we may know that he is Ragnar, let him be taken out as quickly as may be."

So he was led away, and he sat in the pit a long time, but no snake attached itself to him. Folk said,

"This is a very mighty man. No weapons bit him to-day, and now no worms sting him." Then Ella bade them strip off the garment that he wore uppermost. This was done and straightway all the snakes hung upon him with all their might. Then said Ragnar,

"The young pigs would grumble if they knew what the old one is suffering." But although he said this, they did not certainly know that he was Ragnar rather than another king. Then he spoke a verse:

"To many men I brought bitter bale,
And one and fifty battles I've fought;
My bane I did not expect from a worm,
But fate is oft not the thing we thought."

And again he spoke:

"My young ones would snarl if they knew my fate
(There is torment enow as my life is bled);

Fiercely the fangs of the snakes strike home—
Among the beasts I shall soon lie dead."

With that he gave up his life, and so he was carried away. But King Ella suspected that it was Ragnar who had died there. He pondered how he might discover this, and contrive to hold his kingdom, and find out what reply the sons of Ragnar might make when they heard the tale. He decided to have a ship made ready and well manned, and put in charge of it a prudent and hardy man, and told him that he wished to send them to Ivar and his brothers to report their father's death to them. But this journey seemed very unpromising to most men, so that but few wished to undertake it. Then said the King,

"Give careful attention to the manner in which each of the brothers is moved by these tidings. Depart thereafter according as ye have favoring wind." He prepared their journey in such wise that they wanted for nothing; and thereafter they went away, and their voyage was successful.

The sons of Ragnar had been harrying in the southern realms at this time; and now they turned north, intending to visit their kingdom, where Ragnar ruled. They knew nothing of the outcome of his raid, but great was their curiosity to know the end of it. They

journeyed across the land from the south, and wherever folk heard of their coming, they destroyed their own burgs and fled away, taking their gods with them, so that the brothers could scarce find meat for their men. One morning Bjorn Ironside awoke and said a verse:

"The raven flies boldly each day by the burg,
Yet it cries that of hunger it's like to die;
Over sandy ways let it fly to the south,
And feast where the slain of our battles lie."

And again he spoke:

"First we fared to the Roman realm
And little food had the fighters then;
With my sword I smote many gray-beards dead,
And the eagle screamed over slaughtered men."

CHAPTER XVI

NOW it happened that they reached Denmark before the messengers of King Ella, and they abode there quietly with their men. But the messengers and their band came to the burg where Ragnar's sons were being feasted; they entered the hall where they were drinking and approached the high-seat in which Ivar lay. Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye and Hvitserk

sat at chess, but Bjorn Ironside was sharpening a spear-shaft on the floor of the hall. When the messengers came before Ivar they gave him worthy greeting; he received their greetings and asked them whence they came and what news they had to tell. He who led them replied that they were Englishmen, and King Ella had sent them thither to report the fall of their father Ragnar. At that word Hvitserk and Sigurd dropped their chess, and hearkened closely to these tidings; Bjorn was standing in the midst of the floor and leaning upon his spear-shaft. But Ivar asked them very carefully by what chance he had lost his life. They told him everything, from the time Ragnar had reached England until his death. And when the tale reached the point where he said "my young ones would snarl," Bjorn grasped his spear-shaft so hard that the imprint of his hand could be seen upon it afterwards. When the messengers had finished their report he shook it so that it broke in two pieces. Hvitserk was holding a piece of chess that he had moved and he squeezed it so tightly that blood burst out under each finger-nail. Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye had been holding a knife and cutting his nails as the story was told; and so intently did he listen that he gave no heed before the knife had gone as deep as the bone, and he flinched no whit.

But Ivar asked about the whole thing very fully; only his face was red and blue by turns, and by starts he grew very pale, and his entire skin was swollen up with the fierceness that was in his breast.

Then Hvitserk spoke, and said that they could take most speedy revenge by slaying the messengers of King Ella. Ivar said,

"That shall not be. They shall depart in peace, wheresoever they will; and if they lack aught let them tell it me, so that I may give it to them."

And now that they had discharged their errand they left the hall and went to their ships. When they had a favoring breeze they put out to sea, and they had a good journey until they reached King Ella and told him how each of the brothers had received the tidings. When King Ella heard that, he said,

"Likely it is that we must needs fear Ivar, or else none other, according to what is said of him; they all have stout hearts; but we must contrive to hold our realm against them." And he had a watch set throughout all his kingdom so that no army could come upon him unawares.

But when the messengers had departed from the brothers, they parleyed together and discussed how they might best gain revenge for their father Ragnar. Then Ivar said,

"I shall have no part in it and give no men, since it went with Ragnar even as I foresaw. From the beginning he went about the matter ill: he had no quarrel with King Ella; and it has often happened that when a man stubbornly determines to do a wrongful thing he has his downfall thereby. I will take a payment of King Ella if he will offer it me."

When his brothers heard that they became very angry, and said they would never suffer such a disgrace, although he might wish it. "Many people would say that our hands are lying all too unused upon our knees, if we do not avenge our father. Yet we have harried far and wide in the world and slain many an innocent man. It shall not be so! Rather let us make ready every ship that is seaworthy in Denmark, and gather so many troops that every man who is able to bear shield against King Ella shall go with us."

But Ivar said he would leave all the ships he commanded, save the one that he owned himself. And when it was heard that he took no interest in the affair, the brothers obtained far fewer men, but they set out none the less.

When they reached England King Ella was warned, and at once he had his trumpets blown and all men summoned who would follow him. Thus he gathered

so large a host that none could count it, and so he set out against the brothers. Ivar was not there when they met in battle; the end of it was that the sons of Ragnar took to flight, and King Ella had the victory. While he was pursuing the host, Ivar said that it was not his intent to return home; "I will try instead whether King Ella will show me some honor or not; it seems better to me to accept payment than to fare again as we have done just now."

Hvitserk said that he would not share with him, and he would have to proceed with his own affairs as he wished, "but we shall never take money for our father's death."

Ivar said that he must part with them there, and told them to rule over the kingdom that they had all held together, "but ye shall send me such movable riches as I call for." After he had said this he bade them farewell, and he turned his steps thence to King Ella. When he appeared before the King he gave him worthy greeting and thus addressed him:

"I have come to thee to sue for reconciliation with thee and for such honor as thou wilt grant me. I see now that I am no match for thee, and it seems better to me to take from thee such honor as thou wilt offer me than to lose the lives of more of my men, or mayhap of myself, before thee." King Ella answered,

"Some men say it is not a good thing to trust thee, and thou speakest oft fair when thy thought is treacherous; it will be hard for us to guard ourselves against thee and thy brothers."

"I ask thee for but little; if thou wilt grant it, I shall swear thee an oath never to fight against thee." Then the King asked what payment he wished.

"I will," said Ivar, "that thou give me as much of thy land as an ox-hide extends over, and a foundation-wall to be built about it: no more do I ask, and I see that thou wilt do me little honor if thou wilt not grant me that."

"I do not know that that would do us any harm," said the King, "even though thou didst have so much of our land, and of a surety I will give it thee if thou wilt swear not to fight against me; and I do not fear thy brothers if thou art but true to me."

CHAPTER XVII

NOW it was so agreed among them that Ivar should swear never to shoot against the King and never to give counsel for his injury, and in return he should have as much of England as was covered by the largest ox-hide he could find.

Then Ivar took the hide of an old bull and had it softened and thrice stretched. This he had cut up as narrow as possible, and he let it be drawn out, the hairy side and the fleshy side separate; when this was done the strip was marvellously long, far longer than anyone had thought. He had it stretched out on a field, and the land within was wide enough for a very great burg, and outside he had the ground marked for the foundation of mighty castle walls. Then he summoned many wrights and had many houses built on that field, and a great burg was raised that is now called Londonburg. It is the greatest and most famed in all the northland.

When he had caused this burg to be built he had surrendered all his movable wealth therefor; for he was so openhanded that he gave with both hands, and he was thought so wise that all folk sought his counsel and advice in difficult matters. All these he settled in such wise that each man was most pleased. And he grew so well liked that all were his friends; he was of great help to King Ella in the government of the land, and the King left to him many affairs and cases, and did not need to manage them himself.

When Ivar had attained so much of his purpose that he was sure of peace for himself, he sent men to his brothers to ask them for as much gold and silver

as he wished. When these men reached the brothers they told their errand, and also reported how his affairs had progressed, for men did not know upon what schemes he was brooding. So the brothers decided that he no longer had his former nature. They sent him as much treasure as he asked for; and when this reached Ivar, he gave it to all of the strongest men in the land, and thus gained for himself the followers of King Ella. They all promised him to remain inactive although he should go to war there in England.

When Ivar had thus won over the men, he sent messengers to his brothers to tell them that he wished them to levy ships and men from all the lands they ruled over, and to call upon every man they could get. And when they received these tidings they quickly saw that he must think they were likely to gain the victory now. They gathered a host throughout all Denmark and Gautland and all the realms that they had power over. They assembled warriors without number, until their levy was complete.

Then they set sail for England and journeyed by day and night, for they wished news of them to get about as late as possible. This was reported to King Ella, and he too gathered men, but obtained very few, since Ivar had won over much of his host. Now Ivar

came before Ella and told him that he wished to fulfill the oath he had sworn. "I cannot control the deeds of my brothers, but I may contrive to meet them and find out if they will halt their army and do no more ill than they have already wrought."

Ivar went to his brothers and urged them eagerly to proceed as best they might and let it come to a battle as quickly as possible, "for the King has far fewer forces than ye," he said. They answered that he did not need to urge them, and that their intent was the same as before. Thereafter Ivar went to meet King Ella, and told him that they were much too violent and mad to listen to his words, "and when I tried to bring about peace between thee and them, they shouted against it. Now I would fain fulfill my oath not to fight against thee, but remain quiet with my men, let the battle fare as it may."

Soon after that, King Ella and his folk saw the army of the brothers, and it approached marvellously fast. Then said Ivar, "It is now time, O King, to draw up thy host, for I suspect that they will make a fierce attack upon thee for a while."

When the two sides encountered there was a great battle, and the sons of Ragnar charged fiercely through the ranks of King Ella, and so violent were they that they thought only to wreak as much slaugh-

ter as they could; and the combat was both fierce and long. And this time the end of it was that King Ella and his men took to flight, but he was captured. Ivar was near by at that time, and he said that they should thus devise his death. "It is now the time," said he, "to remember the death he gave our father. Let a skilled wood-carver mark out an eagle on his back as deep as may be, and let that eagle be reddened with his blood."

The man who was called to do this work did as Ivar commanded him. King Ella was very sore before it was completed. He died thereafter, and the brothers thought now that they had avenged their father. Ivar said he would give them the kingdom that they formerly had together, for he wished to rule over England.

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER that Hvitserk and Bjorn and Sigurd went home to their kingdom, but Ivar remained behind and ruled in England. From that time they kept their armies together less often, and harried in various different lands. Randálin, their mother, was now an old woman. One time her son Hvitserk had been warring in Russian parts, and so mighty was the force

against him that he could not resist, but was captured by them. He chose as his manner of death that he should be burnt on a pyre of dead men's skulls; and so he died. When Randalin heard that she spoke a stave:

"One of my sons is slain in the East,
Hvitserk, who never fled from his foes;
He was burned on the heads of slaughtered men;
Before he fell, this death he chose."

And again she spoke:

"On many men's skulls he took his place,
And bade that the fire should sing at his bane;
On what better couch can a warrior lie?
A prince overcame him; he died with fame."

A great line is descended of Sigurd Snake-Eye: his daughter was called Ragnhild, mother of Harald Fair-Hair, who was the first to reign alone over Norway. Ivar ruled over England until his death, which came from illness. While he was lying in his last sickness he bade folk lay him where the land was most exposed to war; he said he did not expect any of those who might there come ashore to gain a victory. When he died they did as he had said, and he was laid in a burial-mound. And many men say that when

Harald, Sigurd's son, came to England he reached the place where Ivar lay; and on that raid he fell. And when William the Bastard came to the land he went there and broke open Ivar's mound and saw him there quite unrotted. He had a great pyre made and caused Ivar to be burnt on it. After that he warred on the country and gained victory over it.

Many men are descended from Bjorn Ironside: one of these was Thord, who dwelt at Hofdi on Hofdastrand, a very great chieftain.

When all the sons of Ragnar were dead, the host that had followed them was scattered far and wide; and none of those who had been with Ragnar's sons thought there was any value in other princes. There were two of them who journeyed far and wide throughout the land to look for some prince whom they might think it was no disgrace to serve; but they did not travel together.

CHAPTER XIX

IT happened out in a certain land that a king had two sons; he fell ill and died, and the two sons wished to hold a funeral feast for him. They invited to the banquet all men who should hear of it in the

space of the three following winters. This was reported far and near. For the three winters between they made ready for the feast. When the summer for the feast came, and the time that had been appointed, so many men were gathered there that no one had ever seen the like; many large halls were made ready and many tents outside.

When the first evening was far spent a man came to the hall; he was tall beyond all others, and it could be seen from his dress that he had been with noble men. When he entered the hall he went before the brothers and addressed them, and asked them where they would have him sit. They were pleased with the stranger, and told him to sit on the upper bench. He required the space of two men. When he had sat down they brought drink to him, as to the others; but no horn was so great that he did not empty it at one draught, and it appeared to all that he valued the rest of them very little.

Now it befell that a second man came to this feast. He was rather larger than the first; he had a wide hat like the first one, and when he came before the throne of the young kings, he greeted them courteously, and asked them where he should sit. They told him to sit farther in on the upper bench. He went to his place; and both of the strangers were so large

that five men arose to make room for them. He who came first was the lesser man at drinking; but the second one drank so fast that he almost poured the ale into himself at a draught from each of the horns, yet it could not be seen that he grew drunk; rather he appeared discontented with his fellows on the bench and turned his back to them. He who came first bade him join him in a game, "and I shall lead," said he. He thrust against the other with his hand, and spoke this verse:

"I bid thee, tell us the deeds thou hast done:
Hast thou seen the raven gorged with the slain?
More often thou hast sat and fed in the hall
Than feasted the bird of war on the plain!"

Now it appeared to him who sat on the outside that he was challenged by this verse, and he spoke a stave in reply:

"Be silent, thou who hast clung to thy home!
In none of thy deeds hast thou outdone me.
Thou never gavest wolves to eat and drink—
What is the thing that troubles thee?"

He who came first replied:

"Over the surf our strong ship sailed,
Under shining byrnies our bodies bled;
The wolf's mouth gaped for the men we slew,
Gold we won, and eagles we fed."

Then spoke the one who came second:

"Where went thou when we launched our ship,
The steed of the waves, on the flowing sea?
When we turned its prow again to the land,
It's little then that I saw of thee."

Again the first one said:

"Unfitting it is that we quarrel here
Over which was the better man in his day;
I stood by the prow as the ship rode ashore—
Thou by the mast as it sailed away."

The second one answered:

"Both of us fought with Ragnar and Bjorn;
Heroes we were, unknown to blench!
From Bulgarland battle I've wounds in my side:
Comrade, move farther in on thy bench."

Thus they recognized each other at last, and remained together at the feast.

CHAPTER XX

OGMUND was the name of a man who was called the Dane. One time he set out with five ships and anchored by Samsey in Munarvag harbor. It is said that his cooks went ashore to make ready the meat, and the other men betook them to the woods

to amuse themselves. There they found an ancient man of wood, forty ells high and overgrown with moss. They could still see all his features, and they wondered amongst themselves who could have sacrificed to that great idol. Then the man of wood spoke:

"Long time since the sea-king's sons
Launched their ships and came this way,
Over sea-paths hither sailing;
I have dwelt here since that day.

"Mighty warriors, Lodbrok's sons,
Raised me by the sea-side then;
Me upon this shore they worshipped—
Prayed me for the bane of men;

"Bade me stand beside this thorn-bush,
Moss-grown, while this strand may last;
Neither flesh nor garment clothes me—
On me beats the cold rain-blast."

This seemed very wonderful to them, and they told about it afterwards to other men.

THE LAY OF KRAKA

THE LAY OF KRAKA

1

We hewed with the sword! It is not long since
That I journeyed to Gautland to slaughter the snake;
Thora the maiden I won in that fray,
And men call me Lodbrok because of the deed,
When my burnished spear slew the mighty drake.

2

We hewed with the sword! I was still a young lad
When we fought by Eyrasund in the East:
High ran the sea with the blood of the slain,
The hard iron rang on the studded helms,
Ran waded in blood; the wolves had a feast.

3

We hewed with the sword! We lifted our spears;
In my twentieth year I fared far and wide;
I fought eight jarls at the Dvina's mouth,
And I gorged the wolves with a grisly meal:
With our sweat the sea was swollen full-tide.

4

We hewed with the sword! In war it befell
That I sent the Helsings to Odin's close;
We anchored by the Ifa, we wielded our swords,
The waves ran red, and our shields were riven,
Our bucklers rang with the sound of our blows.

5

We hewed with the sword! None fled away
Before Herraud fell on his steed-of-the-sea;
No bolder jarl in the days to come
Will cleave the waves with his long war-ships:
Stout-hearted ever in battle was he.

6

We hewed with the sword! Men cast down their shields
When by our arrows their breasts were rent;
Our swords bit hard by Skarpa-skerry,
And red were all shields ere Rafn fell:
On the byrnies ran sweat with hot gore blent.

7

We hewed with the sword! High screamed the blades
Before King Eystein was felled in the fray:

The sword struck home on helmet and shield,
From our wounds sprang forth the warm wet blood;
Our foes were left for the birds of prey.

8

We hewed with the sword! At Enderis Isles
The ravens received rich flesh to tear;
The steeds of the witches were battened full,
The arrows flew up with the rising sun,
The steel resounded on helmets there.

9

We hewed with the sword! Before Bornholm
The ravens were pastured; our shields were red;
Rain beat on our armor, and shaft struck steel,
Vulnir fell in that fray—he was greatest of kings;
On the dead by the shore the wolves were fed.

10

We hewed with the sword! The strife was far done
Before Frey fell on the Flemish plain;
The blue steel sword struck a mighty blow
On the gilded armor that Hogni wore;
Many maidens wept, but the wolves were fain.

11

We hewed with the sword! In hundreds I saw
Where the ships of the foe by Angel-ness lay;
Six days we sailed to the fight ere they fell,
We raised our spears with the rising sun,
And Valthjof was slain by our swords in that fray.

12

We hewed with the sword! By Bardfirth side
Blood dripped from our blades and the hawks were gorged;
The bow-strings sang when the arrows were sped,
The poisoned steel gave many a wound;
Loud beat the battle-axe Svelnir had forged.

13

We hewed with the sword! In the game of war
We lifted our shields by Hedninga Bay;
There might men see how we sundered steel
And smote on their helms: it was other cheer
Than when in the arms of our brides we lay!

14

We hewed with the sword! In Northumberland
Upon our shields fell a hard cold rain;

When morning had come there was no need
To urge our men to the bitter strife:
The earth was covered with those who were slain.

15

We hewed with the sword! In the Southern Isles
To Herthjof our fight was lost;
There Rognvald fell when the battle was high—
That was bitterest blow to the men of his band—
In the combat many a dart was tossed.

16

We hewed with the sword! The dead lay in heaps
And the wolves rejoiced in the battle-roar;
Marstein, who ruled the Irish realm
By Vederfjord gave them rich repast:
The ravens received their meed of war.

17

We hewed with the sword! Many men I saw
Who fell in the morning by strife fordone:
My son dropped down with a blade in his heart,
My stout-hearted hero, by Egil slain:
Spears clashed on byrnies; the banners shone.

18

We hewed with the sword! By warriors true
Good flesh was cut and to wolves was given:
On Vickskeid, where ships were reddened with blood,
There was no banquet with maids and wine:
In the battle many a war-sark was riven.

19

We hewed with the sword! Against three kings
We fought at dawn by Lindisore;
Few were the men that there escaped;
They were rent asunder by hawks and wolves;
In the sea fell floods of Irish gore.

20

We hewed with the sword! I saw fair lads,
The friends of women, give way, afraid:
It was little we had, when King Orn fell,
Of the cheer of the bath, by women prepared,
Or stealing a kiss from a youthful maid.

21

We hewed with the sword! Brands bit on shields,
The gilded darts struck on the weeds of war;
For a long time hence men will see and know

How the princes gave battle by Anglesey—
The arrows were dyed by the banks of Ore.

22

We hewed with the sword! Is a man more doomed
Though he's left in the face of a storm of spears?
He who never has fought may bewail lost life;
It is ill to urge cowards to eager strife;
Little good from his heart has the man who fears.

23

We hewed with the sword! It is meet and just
That man should face man where drawn swords sing:
No thane should flinch back from his fellow-thane,
The bold man ever has hardily fought,
And the lover of maids loves the battle-din.

24

We hewed with the sword! It is wise to yield
To the word of the fates; none escape their decrees:
Yet I little thought Ella would be my bane
When I fed the hawks and pastured the wolves
And drove my ships through the Scottish seas.

25

We hewed with the sword! I am glad to know
That in Odin's hall the benches are laid:
We shall soon drink our ale from the deers' horns there
(The bold man never shrinks back from death)
I shall not go in like a man afraid.

26

We hewed with the sword! Now Aslaug's sons
Would hasten to combat with steel-tipped darts
If they knew that I lay in this utter need
And that venomous worms were fierce at my flesh:
From their mother and me they have won stout hearts.

27

We hewed with the sword! My life is near done,
The adder at my heart gives me bitter pains:
May the sharp sword likewise reach Ella's breast,
For these tidings will rouse the wrath of my sons,
They will not sit still, my hardy swains.

28

We hewed with the sword! Fifty times and one
In battle the ranks of the foe I flayed:

But little I thought that another king
Would overmaster me at the end;
The gods give me welcome; I die unafraid.

29

I am ready to go. Odin's maids have come
To call me home to his hall on high:
With the gods I shall merrily drink my ale;
My days are done, and laughing I die.

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